REPORT RESUMES

ED 013 825 24 TE 000 067

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH, TEACHER PACKET, GRADE 11.

NEBRASKA UNIV., LINCOLN, CURRICULUM DEV. CTR.

PUB DATE 65

CONTRACT OEC-2-10-119

EDRS PRICE MF-$1.25 HC NOT AVAILABLE FROM EDRS. 309P.

DESCRIPTORS- *CURRICULUM GUIDES, *ENGLISH CURRICULUM, *ENGLISH INSTRUCTION, *GRADE 11, *TEACHING GUIDES, AMERICAN LITERATURE, COMPOSITION (LITERARY), ESSAYS, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, NOVELS, PARAGRAPH COMPOSITION, POETRY, SHORT STORIES, LANGUAGE, LITERARY ANALYSIS, SATIRE, LITERATURE, NEBRASKA CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Grade 11

Teacher Packet

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

MAN AND NATURE:
INDIVIDUALISM AND IDEALISM:
SPIRITUAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Grade 11

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CORE TEXTS:

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selected Prose and Poetry, Rinehart 11, $1.25.
Henry David Thoreau, Walden and The Famous Essay on Civil Disobedience, A Signet Classic, CD32, 50¢.
Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, A Signet Classic, CT23, 75¢.
Emily Dickinson, Emily Dickinson, The Laurel Poetry Series, Dell LB138, 35¢.

I. OVERVIEW: The Qualities of American Transcendentalism

The following unit is an extension of the "Romantics" section of the 10th-grade "Nature" unit and a preparation for the 12th-grade unit on the English Romantics; it considers the most distinguished American "romantics," if a single label may be applied to such diverse figures as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. (Dickinson is studied as both like and different from these figures.) The unit is basically concerned with a genre which may be called symbolic autobiography or spiritual autobiography, a genre which would appear to begin with Augustine's Confessions and to be developed in such works as St. Bonaventure's The Mind's Journey to God, Dante's Divine Comedy, and Bunyan's Grace Abounding. But the spiritual autobiography which these nineteenth-century Americans write is not the story of a Christian journey to any revelation which can be set down as dogma or publicly asserted as revelation. It is, rather, the story of a journey to a sort of subjectively discovered identity, the story of an identification with a subjectively conceived "Presence of something deeply interfused." It is not the story of a journey of "reason and will," the faculties in which writers in more orthodox periods would have centered their spiritual pilgrimages, but a journey in which intuition leads and feeling dictates, in which the intense, feeling, individual, subjective consciousness, and it alone, determines what is genuine. For these writers, the symbolic tokens provided by the book of Nature as to what is "beyond nature" are not keyed to the Book of God's word, to public Biblical symbolism. (cf. 7th Grade, Hebrew Religious Narrative unit.) Life has a private significance discovered by the individual in an actual private encounter, or set of encounters, generally with nature. Under the pressure of high imagination and intense feeling, the individual half creates and half sees the life that flutters in the natural world, life somehow concealed behind or about its seemingly opaque and spiritless surfaces. Viewing life in a new and primeval light, the individual learns from it to understand what wholly new and wholly good individual purpose his own life has or may have.

Kinds of spiritual autobiography differ from writer to writer insofar as they are individuals:

1. Emerson: the essay as spiritual autobiography
2. Thoreau: the naturalist's book as spiritual autobiography
3. Whitman: the incantatory poem as spiritual autobiography
4. Dickinson: the short lyric as spiritual autobiography

In each of the first three figures, the autobiography is intended to authenticate and objectify certain private truths; the following "truths" are central in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman:

1. The individual, subjective, intuitive consciousness is the sole test of spiritual truth.
2. The individual, subjective consciousness tends to discover spiritual truth in the presence of a "god-filled" symbolic nature and in contemplating the potentially "god-filled" nature of other men, particularly free men in a democratic society who have an open material frontier before them.
3. The individual, subjective consciousness tends to regard traditional social forms and formulae, conventional "cohesive" uses of language, as sources of whatever appears to be evil in man. It regards man, rightly understood as the breath of God, as incapable of individual malice or evil.

The real basis of transcendentalism is the belief in transcendental ideas, in intuitive knowledge--the belief that knowledge transcends experience. You can make a rough schematic drawing of transcendental ideas in the following manner: Draw an isosceles triangle with a horizontal base and place Intuition at the top, placing other ideas following from faith in intuition in a descending rank. Place these ideas according to an increasing generality as you successively fill in the triangle, layer by layer. Finally, leave a broad base which will allow for characteristics general enough to account for the singularly various following that was attracted to the movement--men often mutually repellent and sometimes sharply critical of each other. The second level of the transcendental "triangle" would contain its emphasis on extreme individualism and Emerson's conception that the soul, as divine, as a participant in the whole of divinity, is the guarantor that intuition is good and never plays tricks, that intuitive knowledge is true. Transcendentalism is a beautiful idealism that goes the full circle of mystical experience and encloses all experience within what Emerson calls the One, the divine life.

Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman trust the subjective and intuitive, search for the symbolic and fraught natural experience and the mystical transnatural experience, and reject the materialistic, the dogmatic, and the conforming in social expression. That each writer chooses a form of the spiritual autobiography for his genre is perfectly understandable. Each writes in a time when conventional religious dogma was being severely challenged, and each relies exclusively on the private and subjective as the authority for his moral-religious assertions. Thus is theology learned from the Self. The mythos to which each writer subscribes is a mythos which each would think of as revealed in his own private consciousness and worked out in his own "model" experience. Not for him the group myths (cf. the 7th and 8th grade units on myth and the popular cultural hero) in the ordinary sense; Whitman's Lincoln is a peculiarly private Lincoln. These writers do not turn to the language games, to the generic forms hallowed by custom and group usage which are studied in Grade 9. Whatever Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman may owe to Kant and German idealism, or to such English romantics as Coleridge, Wordsworth and Blake, they are their own men working out their own métier and content.

II. Transcendental Individualism

A. The Religious Roots:

For the purposes of this unit one may distinguish two kinds of 19th-century faith in the individual:

1. Faith in the individual implies that the individual has a right to determine what his own conduct should be in all areas save those few which government must control; in those few areas, the individual is, by law, empowered to participate in the formation of collective political decisions.
2. Individualism emphasizes that the individual has a capacity for unique "subjective-religious" experience and encourages him to seek such experiences apart from the worship of the group and to follow out their implications in his life.

Both of these kinds are relevant to the understanding of our authors. Let us examine the latter first. In sophisticated circles in the early Roman empire (1st Century, A.D., c.f. the 7th-grade Classical Mythology unit), belief in the Homeric Greek pantheon, even in an allegorical Greek pantheon, became increasingly less crucial as republic became empire. In place of the older religious forms, there developed a series of religious cults or mystery religions which emphasized private, relatively ecstatic and subjective religious experiences: Mithraism, Neo-Pythagoreanism, Neo-Platonism and so forth. Into this milieu Pauline Christianity came. Though ancient Hebrew culture had known both monarchist and more egalitarian forms of tribal government, the Christianity which Paul brought to the ancient world did not carry with it any direct implication as to an ideal polity--individualistic or collectivist, republican or imperial. It did emphasize private conscience, private charity toward neighbor, private love for God; Paul himself speaks of a subjective kind of religious experience which he knew (Emerson mentions this experience "The Over Soul"). At the same time, because Pauline Christianity was concerned with the elimination of doctrine believed to be inconsistent with original Christian teaching and with the organization of churches, it therefore assumed, urgently, a certain public, collective aspect. Indeed, one may see in such a church father as Augustine an emphasis, in his theology and devotional writings, on the significance of private religious experience (the Confessions); another emphasis, somewhat similar to that in the Greek philosophers, on the responsibility of the individual mind to discover truth and choose to act on it (De Trinitate, De Ordine); and a third and very different, though not necessarily inconsistent, emphasis, in his actions as bishop, on the collective in religious experience and action. Western Christendom has always included these three strains: a private mystical strain, a theological strain emphasizing freedom of the individual will and man's individual capacity to make rational choices, and, finally, a public strain which emphasizes man's need for collective worship, common belief, and in some periods conformity of belief enforced by ecclesiastical courts. The reformation tended to assert the limited power of institutions over personal belief, although in most cases the reformers did not admit that all believers, as "priests," could legitimately adhere to dogmatic formulations different from their own. The reformers did tend to insist, as had serious Catholic thinkers in every period, on the primacy of the personal encounter with God over submission to institutional formulations.

This individualism or subjectivity of religious emphasis was, in the seventeenth century, to go much farther than it ever went in ancient Rome: The dissenting "inner light" groups, Anabaptists in Germany and the Low countries, Brownists and Separatists and Quakers in England, and Congregationalists and Quakers in America, emphasized the legitimacy of the completely private encounter with God, the completely private religious experience, and the completely private interpretation of the Bible. They saw religion as essentially unrelated to dogmatic formulation, ecclesiastical institutions, or group beliefs. That this kind of dependence on the individual in religion had its corollary in the political theory of Protestant dissenting groups has been demonstrated by Mr. A. S. P. Woodhouse in his Puritanism and Individual Liberty.

Out of these liberal, quietist Christian traditions, out of the related tradition of Arminian Christianity (a tradition which assigned great power in salvation to the free human will), and out of ancient religious Neo-Platonism, Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman emerge--Emerson and Thoreau from the Unitarian offshoot of Protestant Liberalism and Whitman from the Quaker offshoot. The 19th-century Unitarian, before Emerson, was much more the rationalist and Deist than were either the "inner light" religious groups or our authors; but the Unitarian (Channing, for instance), in his denial of the authority of the Bible and with it the doctrine of the Trinity, in his denial of man's innate tendency toward evil and his general incapacity to will the good, and in his insistence that man will know all of the eternal justice he will ever know in this world, was at one with our authors. Emerson and Thoreau--and Whitman, to some degree--share in the unorthodox belief and the social utopianism, the "do-goodism," of a Channing, but they have far less faith in prudent common sense, in "Reason" as understood by 18th-century rationalists, or in scientific knowledge than did he. Our authors tend to have faith in the uncalculating commitment to the right (even to the point of self-martyrdom in non-violent opposition to whatever strikes one as evil), in "intuition" as it is understood by 19th-century German and English romantic idealists, and in such knowledge as is given by nature to the visionary who can discover sermons in stones. The skepticism of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman is sometimes related more to Eastern than to Western religious traditions. It is true that Emerson and Thoreau and perhaps Whitman read and gloried in the sacred books of the East, as did others of their contemporaries, and that they sometimes paraphrased these books in their own writing. Yet it is also true that Emerson wrote "The Over-Soul," conceiving the soul of man as a reservoir of divine power, before he had read the Orientals (the Bhagvad Gita and Vishnu Purana), whose doctrines are substantially those inherent in transcendentalism itself, in man's eagerness to follow his intuition as far as it will lead him. Emerson found in these works not a new belief but an interesting expression of some things he believed already.

Transcendentalism's religious mysticism has philosphic roots in the rebellion of the German idealists against naturalistic and sensationalist epistemology. The test of truth is a problem that has be-deviled philosophers throughout history--and it is a problem that annoys many a reader of Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman like a gad-fly. What is the source of knowledge? How does one know that what he 'knows' is true? It is on the answers to such questions that a philosophy is constructed. Sensationalism may be said to begin with Hobbes and Locke, who held that "There is nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses." To Locke, all ideas are derived from and reducible to sensation, all knowledge (and all that there is to think about) comes from experience (cf. "Man's Picture of Nature," grade 10). Cartesian rationalism, derived from Descartes, says that all knowledge comes from "the mind." German idealism, in reply, says that some knowledge comes from transcendent sources beyond mind and experience. The backgrounds for the development of German idealism, the eighteenth-century currents of Cartesian rationalism, Lockian sensationalism, and related movements are detailed in Basil Willey's The 18th-Century Background and, in part, in the twelf' grade Satire unit (which also used Willey's book as background). Pope's "Know thyself" and Emerson's "Trust theyself" are as disparate as Catholic Rationalism and Heterodox transcendentalism, as widely separated as Locke and Kant. The rationalist is concerned with human history, the transcendentalist with human nature. The idealist and, later, the transcendentalist do not deny the senses or the power of reason, but, after Kant, they do tend to lose sight of them in a total allegiance to intuition as the source of knowledge and the test of truth. Kant had reached the view that not all knowledge comes by the physical senses, that certain truths do not arise from external sources but transcend human experience, and that these truths are perceived intuitively by the human mind. Among the ideas thus acquired are our conceptions of God, duty, immortality, and the like. Although the existence of these things cannot be proved, they are, said Kant, as real to us as a stone or anything else we can see and grasp. We recognize such ideas as true when we examine our own minds and find every fiber of our being crying out for them. Giving an echo to Kant's theory, Emerson proclaimed, "The blazing proof of immortality is our dissatisfaction with any other explanation." Kant gave the name Transcendental Ideas to such intuitions of the mind.

The English romantics Carlyle and Coleridge read and popularized Kant and similar German idealists in England. Emerson and his contemporaries were the first generation of Harvard students to study the English romantic writers. From Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman learned. Historians are generally agreed that the young Americans did not learn very much that was new to them from this reading or from travels and friendships in foreign parts; what of value they did receive was stimulation, nourishment, and sanction for the exciting ideas they were already thinking, ideas which they were certain were true. There is no question, however, about the source of the name Transcendentalism; it came directly from the philosophy of Kant.

B. The Political Roots:

At the same time as our authors are unorthodox in religion, even anti-orthodox, they are also democratic Utopians in politics. They hope that the individual, relieved of the burden of tradition and the "illusion" of depravity, will be able to create the good--i.e., the egalitarian or free--society. They have faith in the political kind of individualism which we defined at the beginning of the unit; in this, they share the common faith of 19th-century America, but they carry it further. For, in their faith in the democratic process and the capacity of the god-like individual who is wholly self-assured to act as the solvent of evil in society and to inspire in other men a similar emergence from the chrysalides of evil, they reinterpret the traditional thought which inspired the American revolution. One could trace the roots of American egalitarian thought in 5th-century-B.C. Athens, but one must remember that in old Athens only 15% of the populace could vote, only 30% had full legal privileges, and over 50% of the populace was a slave group. One could trace its roots in ancient Republican Rome, a Rome to which the Founding Fathers looked, as did republicans everywhere in Western civilization from the 15th century on (cf. Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance). One can trace that thought to the development of Parliament as the Kings' largest council in late medieval England or to the development and applications of natural-law theory (the idea that the king and all civic officers are limited as to what laws they can promulgate and enforce by certain principles evident in every man's nature and written there by God) in late medieval times. One can attribute it to Locke, Montesquieu, or Rousseau, the "social contract" philosopher who translated "natural law" theory into a theory which implied that government is constantly subject to the consent of the governed, a position which gave to the masses the right to change governments regularly and not simply, as was the case in medieval theory and practice, at moments when a tyrant with no respect for natural law appeared. And, finally, one can trace this thought in part, as does Mr. Woodhouse in the book by him mentioned above, to the dissenting "inner-light" faith in the individual's complete right to self-determination, a faith which comes to this country with the Separatists (Pilgrims, Congregationalists, etc.; c.f. the Mayflower compact) and the Quakers. The teacher who wishes to understand this kind of political "individualism" should study the following figures:

1. Locke
2. Montesquieu
3. Rousseau
4. Adams
5. Jefferson
6. Channing
7. Jackson

He should examine the following books:

1. H. D. R. Kitto, The Greek Way
2. Hans Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance

3. A. S. P. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Individual Liberty
4. Dienas Nobare, Jefferson and His Time
5. Ralph H. Gafruil, The Course of American Democratic Thought
6. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Age of Jackson

In practice, our authors' religious faith in the individual directed by his intuition, living in harmony with nature and in contact with nature's soul and its interfused presence, comes out in politics sometimes as opposition to the disenfranchisement of women and the brutal institution of slavery, sometimes as objection to the cruelty of industrial society, and sometimes as support for natural conservation; in short, it comes out as opposition to everything which hampers man's full participation in the political process and restricts his contact with the beneficence of nature and nature's God.

The transcendentalists, although they were dedicated to the democratic principle of equality, gave the democrats their allegiance but not their labor, for to do so would have meant acceptance of some regimentation and a violation of their individualism. Emerson turned down the plea of his friend, William Ellery Channing, to support the abolitionist movement, replying that he had other slaves to free, slaves to ignorance, superstition, and fear; and, though he made his position on the slavery question clear on numerous occasions, he could not devote his entire energy to the promotion of any single reform, no matter how important. The transcendentalist has the choice of renovating man's nature or improving his institutions, and Emerson and Thoreau consistently chose the moral, rather than the political, approach.

When the Transcendentalists wrote, a great tide of material prosperity was sweeping the country. New lands were opening up for settlement from Illinois to Oregon; turnpikes, canals, steamboats, and railroads were rushed to completion. The fur trade, overseas commerce, whaling, the cotton kingdom of the South, and the factories of the North were bringing wealth to the new, happy nation. The Whigs played the conservative, moneyed, Hamiltonian tune, and the Jacksonian Democrats, followed by some of our men, played a farmer, settler, laboring man tune. Boston merchants were happy in body and soul, for they were prosperous and their Unitarian Church was liberal in religion and conservative in everything else (it was called "the cult of the arrived"). Bostonians thought rather better of themselves than they had been permitted to do under Calvinism; they no longer felt that they were children of Adam. In fact, they boasted that a man who was born in Boston did not need to be born again. The transcendentalists did not approve of the low commercial tone of Boston, but felt rather that man had infinite capacities for self betterment as a moral being.

One of the projects which was promoted under Transcendental influence was Brook Farm, an attempt to realize the utopian deream of an ideal society based on communistic principles. Emerson was objectively interested in the experiment but could not arouse any personal enthusiasm for it. On October 17, 1840, he set down his conclusions in his Journal: "Yesterday George and Sophia Ripley, Margaret Fuller, and Alcott discussed here the Social Plans (for Brook Farm). I wish to be convinced, to be thawed, to be made nobly mad by the kindling before by eye of a new dawn of human piety. . . And not once could I be inflamed, but sat aloof and thoughtless; my voice faltered and fell. . .I do not wish to remove from my present prison to a prison a little larger. I wish to break all prisons. I have not yet conquered my own house;" and in 1844 he again wrote that "in the arrangements at Brook Farm, as out of it, it is the person, not the community, that avail;" he added a little later, "Dear heart, take it safely home to thee, that there will can be no cooperation," a judgement that explains the clever phrase with which he demolished Brook Farm at the end: "It is the Age of Reason in a pattypan."

III. Biographies

A. Emerson:

Since Emerson's essays, journals, and sermons are an inner biography, the picture of a mind in the process of forming attitudes, rather than a history of external events, it may be useful to give a brief sketch of Emerson's external life as it bears on the concerns of this unit:

1. Birth: 1803.
2. Harvard graduation: 1821.
3. Harvard Divinity School student, studies divinity with Channing, accepted to Unitarian ministry: 1823-1826.
4. Resigned Unitarian pastorate: 1832.
5. Toured Europe, where he picked up Kantian philosophy and German-English idealism from Coleridge, Carlyle, and Wordsworth: 1832-1833.
6. Read deeply in Plato, the neo-Platonists, and Eastern mystics: 1830's.
7. Remarried and settled in Concord, where his home was a center for literary discussions with Thoreau, Hawthorne, etc. : 1835.
8. Published *Nature*, expressing confidence in the validity of the "divine" subjective consciousness, the symbolic character of Nature, and the interpenetration of God in man and Nature. This work established the basis of all Emerson's later philosophic writing: 1836.
9. *The American Scholar*: 1837.
10. Harvard "Divinity School Address" set down Emerson's "intuitive" religious position; Emerson violently attacked, not asked to return to speak at Harvard for thirty years: 1838.
11. Publication of *Essays, First Series*, including "Self-Reliance," "Over-Soul," and "Conservation." "Self-Reliance" offered the doctrine "Trust thyself" as against the doctrine "Trust society"; "Over-Soul" reaffirmed *Nature's* attitude toward the external world; "Compensation" defined Emerson's doctrine of will: 1841.
12. Thoreau lived with Emerson: 1841-1843.

13. First volume of Emerson's poems; Emily Dickinson is sometimes said to have imitated these poems~~:~~ 1847.
14. Emerson wrote a letter praising Whitman's poems. (Whitman had previously read Emerson and had been influenced by him): 1856.
15. Whitman visited Emerson: 1881.
16. Death: 1882.

Two further biographical considerations come into play in our understanding of Emerson's art: (1) The method he used for presenting his work (his rhetorical situation) and (2) his attitude toward opposition.

1. Emerson made his living primarily by lecturing. His style, both in his lectures and in his essays, was shaped by his admiration for the immediacy and eloquence of oratory. As a very young man he had written that his "passionate love for the strains of eloquence" had influenced his decision to take up the ministry. This love of eloquence led him to regard the art of expression as the art of finding a species of inspiration, an inspiration which he thought that the writer should seek both in determining what he should say and in determining how he should say it. F. O. Matthiessen says, in The American Renaissance, that Emerson was the first American to give really searching attention to language, that he was concerned not only with the choice and arrangement of words but also with probing to the origins of speech in order to find out the sources of its mysterious powers. Emerson epitomized his idea in these words: "In good writing, words become one with things." [1]

   Emerson's method of composition was to keep a constant journal, a rough "inner autobiography," then to draw appropriate material from his Journal and weave it into semi-polished "inner autobiography" as a lecture, and later to polish it into an essay. The journal was not a diary; it was a carefully considered record of his thoughts, written down alsmot every day for some fifty years. He accurately called it his savings bank.

2. Emerson's attitude toward opposition may illustrate for students the extent to which he actually practiced the principle of reliance on the intuitive self rather than on society. One may use the antagonism which grew up around his "Divinity School Address," an address denying the special divinity of Christ, as an example of Emerson's trust in himself. Immediately after the speech was given and for some time thereafter it was an object of violent controversy. Andrews Norton, contemporary of Emerson and former Dexter Professor of Divinity at Harvard, pronounced Emerson's "Divinity School Address" "the latest form of Infidelity." A summary of the "respectable" reaction to Emerson was expressed by John Quincy Adams in 1840, two years after the address:

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[1] For some treatment of this idea, see Grade VIII, "Words and Their Meanings."

> The sentiment of religion is at this time, perhaps, more potent and prevailing in New England than in any other portion of the Christian world. For many years since the establishment of the theological school at Andover, the Calvinists and Unitarians have been battling with each other upon the atonement, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. This has now very much subsided; but other wandering of mind takes the place of that, and equally lets the wolf into the fold. A young man, named Ralph Waldo Emerson, and a classmate of my lamented son George, after failing in the everyday avocations of a Unitarian preacher and schoolmaster, starts a new doctrine of transcendentalism, declares all the old revelations superannuated and worn out, and announces the approach of new revelations and prophecies. Garrison and the non-resistant abolitionists, Brownson and the Marat democrats, phrenology and animal magnetism, all come in, furnishing each some plausible rascality as an ingredient for the bubbling cauldron of religion and politics....[1]

This kind of criticism bothered Emerson, bothered him very much. But he did not choose to mount the podium of rebuttal and lash out with whip-like self-vindication. Instead, he wrote a weak yet self-righteous complaint in his letter to the Reverend Henry Ware; he feigned indifference, referring to the controversy as a storm in a washbowl. But his most characteristic reaction to the storm which had descended upon him is, perhaps, well characterized by "Uriel." Emerson here makes a parable of sorts out of his reaction to criticism, transforming stung vanity into art. One critic has said of Emerson's reaction to criticism that his "rather diffident blandness was hardly satanic pride, but his complete acceptance of himself showed little knowledge of humility." If Emerson was not perfectly secure or, to use his own term, "self-reliant," at least he certainly did not defend his ideas in a cowardly way.

B. Thoreau:

The following dates and biographical remarks may be useful as background for Thoreau:

1. Birth to a Quaker-Puritan family: 1817.
2. Graduated from Harvard, where he had come under the influence of Emerson and other Transcendentalists: 1837.
3. Lived at Emerson's house and served as his handyman: 1841-1843.
4. Lived at Walden pond, where he acquired the experience which went into Walden. Imprisoned during same period for refusing to pay poll-tax; refusal attitude the basis of Civil Disobedience: 1845-1847.
5. Civil Disobedience published: 1849.
6. Walden published: 1854.

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[1] Matthiessen, F. O., The American Renaissance, p. 61.

7. Very active in anti-slavery movement: 1850's.
8. Death: 1862.
9. Emerson edited Thoreau's *Letters*: 1865.

A cautionary note concerning the relationship between Emerson and Thoreau may be in order. Many 19th-century scholarly works tend to elevate Emerson and denigrate Thoreau, an emphasis which mistakenly takes Emerson's pedagogical role in relationship to Thoreau as evidence of his superior literary genius. A master is not necessarily better than his best student, and Emerson was master to Thoreau only in a limited, specific sense. Thoreau's biographer and friend, Frank Sanborn, said of him that "He was inwardly a poet by force of his shaping and controlling imagination, which was his strongest faculty."[1] It was this inward illumination that had caused him to write in his senior year at Harvard, when he was nineteen, "This curious world which we inhabit is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful . . . . The other world is all my art, my pencils will draw no other, my backknife will cut nothing else . . . . I do not use it as a means." Thoreau was already under some influence from Emerson, and certainly this is an expression of idealism whose loftiness would appeal to Emerson. But the close and unbroken intimacy between the two began in the summer following Thoreau's graduation in 1837, after most of Thoreau's ideals were formed. They walked and talked together; Thoreau was a frequent visitor in Emerson's parlor and took part in the famous conversations held there. Soon he was to begin living with the Emersons, as he did intermittently during a period of eight years.

The difference in their ages, 20 and 34, naturally made Thoreau Emerson's protegé. In 1838, Emerson was to write in his *Journal*: "My good Henry Thoreau made this else solitary afternoon sunny with his simplicity and clear perception. How comic simplicity is in this double-dealing, quacking world. Everything that boy says makes merry with society, though nothing can be graver than his meanings." There is appreciation in Emerson's observation, but also a strong flavor of condescension (certainly unconscious). This patronizing tone appears as a minor strain throughout Emerson's comments on his younger friend, including the tribute written for the *Atlantic Monthly* on the occasion of Thoreau's death in 1862. Emerson's last remarks on Thoreau, written much later, show a much better understanding of the kind of man Thoreau was. At the close of that essay the famous man generously says of the obscure one, "The country knows not yet. . . how great a son it has lost." In that essay Emerson seems to have realized Thoreau's greatness.

We often say flippantly that Emerson imitated Carlyle, that Alcott and Thoreau imitated Emerson, and so on, and even Thoreau's contemporaries regarded him as a distorted echo of Emerson's ideas and ideals. Numerous mutual friends claimed that Thoreau underwent such a metamorphosis that in manner and voice he became indistinguishable from his great teacher. Such friends were apparently so hypnotized by the eminence of Emerson that they never could see Thoreau except as dimly reflecting and distorting Emerson's pure light. Charles J. Woodbury, who did not know Thoreau, gained and perpetuated similar ideas about him just from talking to Emerson. Eight years after Thoreau's death Woodbury wrote, "But of Thoreau I cannot say enough. Of no one did Mr. Emerson talk so often and tenderly. The relation between the two needs clearer understanding. Emerson made Thoreau; he was the child of Emerson, as if of his own flesh. . ." [1] However, if one consults Thoreau's college essays and the forensic exercises which Sanborn included in his biography, he finds the man whom we have come to know as the author of Walden strongly prefigured in the boy of eighteen and nineteen; the independence of mind and the dedication to high principles that governed his later life were already formed before Thoreau met Emerson. Thoreau would have been Thoreau anywhere.

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[1] Sanborn, *The Life of Henry David Thoreau*.

The two men were similar in their idealism, their belief in the potential goodness of human nature, and their dedication to high principles. Both were staunch individualists. But they differ as theory and practice differ. Emerson propounded general ideals and viewed life in a rosy glow; Thoreau put ideals into practice and viewed life stripped down. Whereas Emerson protested the Mexican War, which would extend the domain of slavery, but paid his taxes, Thoreau protested by refusing to pay and went to jail. Whereas Emerson idealized nature and wrote abstract essays about it, Thoreau got close to nature by waiting patiently for a frog to croak or a bird to appear, by feeling the tingle of frost in his finger tips, or by sinking his boots in the muck along the riverbank. For Thoreau, learning the ways of nature meant learning freedom; following the laws of nature meant rebellion against man's unnatural customs and institutions. Emerson was distrubed that Thoreau said "No" so uncompromisingly to so many things, but he recognized that Thoreau's consistency and integrity in this respect was a great strength. He liked Thoreau, he said, because he had the courage of his convictions. In 1852 he wrote, "Thoreau gives me, in flesh and blood and pertinacious Saxon belief, my own ethics." On another occasion: "Satan has no bribe for him." After sitting by Thoreau's deathbed, his sister Sophia said, "I never knew so upright a man."

The contemporary who best caught the essential quality of Thoreau in a few words was Thomas Wentworth Higginson. He seems to have looked at Thoreau rather than at a reflection of someone else, and he reported what he saw and understood: "Thoreau makes lead pencils with his father on Monday and Tuesday. On other days he surveys land, both mathematically and meditatively; lays out house-lots in Haverhill and on the moon." Higginson aptly catches the central paradox of Thoreau's career, of the man who looked deeply into his own time and place and found immortal realities.

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[1] Charles J. Woodbury,

C. Whitman:

The biographical sketch of Whitman in the Signet edition is adequate. For the purposes of this unit, two sets of dates need to be emphasized: (1) the dates when Whitman's career crossed with Emerson's, and (2) when Whitman published his poems:

1. Birth to Quaker parents; Whitman's mysticism and democratic feeling are sometimes related to his Quaker background: 1819.
2. Leaves of Grass first published, greeted enthusiastically by Emerson. Whitman had read Emerson and Carlyle by this time: 1855.
3. Second edition of Leaves of Grass: 1856.
4. New edition of Leaves, regular publisher found: 1860.
5. New edition of Leaves, includes Civil War poems: 1867.
6. New editions of Leaves, including best poems of Whitman's great period: 1872 and 1876.
7. Final definitive edition of Leaves; visit to Emerson: 1881.

Whitman wrote little poetry of any consequence after 1871, but, from that date until his death (1892), he occupied himself mainly with reshuffling the order of Leaves. As a result, the chronology of the poems has been obfuscated, but chronology is important if one is to understand Whitman's craft. The poems are treated in this unit according to order of first publication so that the student may see clearly the development of Whitman's craft and consciousness.

1855

The Sleepers p. 330
Song of Myself p. 49
To Think of Time p. 337
There Was a Child Went Forth p. 290

1856

This Compost p. 293
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry p. 144
Spontaneous Me p. 106
To You p. 39

1860

Scented Herbage of My Breast p. 112
Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand p. 114
I Saw in Louisiana a Live Oak Growing p. 121
A Hand-Mirror p. 225
City of Orgies p. 121
A Glimpse p. 124
As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life p. 214
So Long! p. 382
Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking p. 209

1867

Cavalry Crossing a Ford p. 246
Bivouac on a Mountain Side p. 246
The Wound-Dresser p. 252
When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd p. 265

1872

Sparkles from the Wheel p. 308
A Noiseless Patient Spider p. 347
Passage to India p. 321

1881

The Dalliance of the Eagles p. 228

1891

Good-Bye My Fancy p. 404

Although Whitman's arrangement of his poems may have been simply the result of an old man's whim, some careful critics believe that it was an act of concealment. One result of this rearrangement has been to magnify only one side of the poet: the buoyant optimist, patriotic and bombastic, "the prophet and cheerleader of a non-existent democracy, a man who sang songs of joy and of the open road, who saluted pioneers and listened to America singing and chanted the square deific and worshiped the splendid silent sun, and wept over his captain lying cold and dead on the ship of State."[1] This is the side of the poet with its "barbaric yawp" which has attracted some un-literary readers and has turned some discriminating readers away in disgust. In fairness, however, we should add that other critics have found Whitman's primitivism and barbarism attractive. Such critics call Whitman the new American Adam, the embodiment of the strong, lusty, sometimes vulgar spirit of the young America. This unit emphasizes both Whitmans - the swaggering, posturing optimist and the sensitive, reflective poet.

D. Dickinson:

The biographical details of Emily Dickinson's life which are relevant to the unit can easily be set down:

1. Birth: 1830
2. Friendship with Charles Wadsworth, sometimes regarded as the "lover" of the poems: 1854
3. Wadsworth left Amherst and Dickinson increasingly retired from Amherst society: 1862.
4. Death: 1886.
5. Poems first published: 1890.

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[1] R. W. B. Lewis, "Reading Walt Whitman," Reports and Speeches of the Seventh Yale Conference on the Teaching of English, 1961, Yale University, p. 55.

Though Emily Dickinson admired Emerson, she did not correspond with him, nor is there real evidence that she was influenced by Emerson, Thoreau, or Whitman. Her connection with the other three authors studied in the unit is not the connection of mutual admiration and influence but a much more tenuous connection, that of an emergence from a common culture, a common dependence on "experience" (autobiography), and a common escape from conventional Christianity to a more private worship.

Dickinson is still a puzzle, a puzzle partly because she did not write for publication--only seven of her poems were published during her lifetime, and those anonymously. She wrote privately--certainly even her family was unaware that she had written as much poetry as she had. Until recently there was no accurate chronology of her poetry--no systematic arrangement to tell us which poems she wrote first, which next, and which last. She wrote no long work; all of her poems are very short. She didn't bother even to give them titles (they usually go by their first line). Altogether she wrote 1,775 short poems, most of which pose complications for the reader. When her poems were discovered, only a few were published at a time. They were copied and sometimes edited as well by unscholarly persons, family friends, and descendants. It has taken years to get an accurate collection of her works arranged in the order in which they were written. In very recent years the Harvard Press has brought out a three-volume edition of her poems and a three volume collection of her letters (edited by Thomas Johnson). Now for the first time scholars have the materials with which to work. Dickinson has been the subject of many myths from the time of her death, when her sister Lavinia discovered a locked box filled with her poems and decided that they should be given to the world, down to recent years. She has been called "the New England Nun," possibly because she never married; "the shy Recluse," because she stayed close to home and found her own company sufficient; "the Moth of Amherst," because she liked to take walks in the evening, especially at dusk; "the Woman in White," because in her later years she invariably wore white clothing; "the Victim of the Angry Father," because her father, a lawyer, was a rather quick-tempered man; "the Victim of the Blighted Romance," because there is some evidence in her poetry that she fell in love with someone whom she was unable to marry (one critic has named the man, Charles Wadsworth, a Philadelphian clergyman who already had a wife); and "the Half-cracked Daughter of Squire Dickinson," this last by an obviously undiscriminating person. Because some of her poems treat death--though in Dickinson's carefully controlled way--others have called Emily Dickinson a member of the "grave-yard school," a school of extremely sentimental poets who wrote on death in the most mawkish way. The safest approach to an understanding of the kind of woman and writer Dickinson was is to go directly to her writing, her poems and her letters. In going to these, the teacher should be careful to keep her students' eyes on the poems and not on the rather Gothic peculiarities which students, like the critics, wish to attribute to the poet.

IV. Individual Works: Notes and Explications:

A. "The Over-Soul":

Content: The Over-Soul essay is perhaps the central essay in the unit. In it Emerson presents the broad religious precepts upon which his work is built and which must be understood if Thoreau and Whitman are to be understood:

1. There is a divine, intuitive self in every man, a self to be discovered by those who trust intuition rather than calculation, the personal rather than the social.
2. The body and all of man's creations are, properly speaking, symbols or representations of the soul; poetic, symbolic creation is the soul's most vivid epiphany.
3. The soul of each man is but a spark from a divine Oversoul (God), an Oversoul which can be experienced directly in mystical experience when the self retires into itself, when man is at his most subjective and ecstatic(cf. p. 134, Rinehart edition).
4. The soul of each man communicates indirectly, that is through "symbols," with God when that outwardness which is man's visible being and garment communicates with the outwardness which is God's visible being and garment--Nature.
5. The soul of each man also communicates indirectly with God when it seeks beyond surface conventions and postures into the divine "depths" which make up another man and discovers there what his intuitive "selfhood" is. (Seeing "God" in the depths of every other man, the Transcendentalists could not but be egalitarians, massively opposed to slavery and all forms of conventional bondage.)

Imagery and Organization of the "Over-soul" essay: Emerson's kind of spiritual autobiography is perhaps even more subjective than Thoreau's or Whitman's, for Emerson writes about his own uniquely subjective religious experience and his own related adventures with Nature, other men, and books, as if he were describing things as common and open to all men as the water at Walden, as if he were describing what we would normally call the "objective." This makes for part of the difficulty of the Oversoul essay--for the difficulty of all of Emerson's essays--but also for its peculiar power. Emerson speaks confidently, as if what was his vision could be Everyman's. Emerson's rhetoric depends on his using a series of metaphors to express the relationship between the inner and outer.

The Inner	The Outer
1. Man's "inner" divine self.	Man's public conventionality.
2. The inner selves of other men, great men especially.	Their public expressions.
3. The "Over-soul" within, interpreting nature and man.	Visible nature and the visible world.

The metaphors for these outer-inner relationships which appear in the "oversoul" essay give a certain concreteness to a religious idealism where "deep answers to deep." Notice how these simple metaphors try to provoke us to see into the religious mystery described so loosely and materialistically above:

	The Inner	The Outer
1.	God is the source of a river.	What "I" see is only a part of the river.
2.	The river pours into me.	"I" watch the river.
3.	The Supreme Critic (Nature, God) is like the atmosphere in which the earth rests.	We are like the earth.
4.	The oversoul is the whole.	We are parts.
5.	The inner is like a person's face.	The outer is like a masquerade mask.
6.	The inner "soul" is an animation.	The outer is more man's capacity for memory, calculation, comparison, his faculties and physical being.
7.	The inner in man--God, Wisdom.	The outer in man--the facade of Wisdom's temple.
8.	The inner--the eternal.	The outer--temporal reality.
9.	The inner--the Soul.	The outer--the web of events.
10.	The inner--the life of an insect.	The outer--the egg, worm, fly, etc., i.e., succeeding states of exterior being.
11.	The inner--the lover and his beloved and their estimation of each other's selves.	The outer--the estimation of other selves on the basis of knowledge, talent, performance.
12.	The inner--man-to-man (I-Thou) contact, Man-Nature-God (I-God) contact; the Sheik.	The outer--society, brilliance, Pascha.
13.	The inner-rapture, revival, experience, "unkon," convulsion, religious, "mystic madness."	The outer--telling of fortunes, superstition, the desire for a "material" reward in Heaven.
14.	The inner--Spinoza, Kant, Coleridge.	The outer--Locke, Paley, Machiavelli, Stewart.
15.	The inner-Chaucer, Homer, Spenser, Shakespeare, the poets who create emblems (allegories) for states of soul and subjective spiritual perceptions.	The outer--conventional popular writers playing on stereotyped emotional response.

The first three pages of the essay are perhaps its center, an expression of the mystical credo which informs all of these analogies and examples, the hub about which they cluster.

B. Self-Reliance:

Content: The center of this essay is, of course, the admonition "Trust thyself." The essay is an expression of romantic individualism and trust in the subjective, emotional, and intuitive. Notice how like the attitudes toward children expressed by Rousseau in Emile or by Wordsworth in the Immortality Ode are Emerson's attitudes here (p. 167, Rinehart edition). The child becomes, as in Rousseau or Wordsworth, the symbol for the non-conformist at home with his innocence and with God; the foolish "Philanthropist" becomes a symbol of the conformist, complacent with wickedness in a wicked society and shut away from himself and from integrity. The essay includes some remarkably fine satiric passages and bits of Emerson's rather Carlylian "great man" theory of history, a theory which students may see as running counter to Emerson's egalitarianism. The inconsistency is not a real one; great men trust themselves, their divinity or genius, but all men can become great in this sense. The end of the essay is a particularly brilliant application of the implications of finding "self-hood"--the inner divinity--to questions of American religion and culture and American attitudes toward Europe, the past, and other cultures in general.

C. The Divinity-School Address:

Content: Emerson's insistence on the prime importance of the individual is essentially Christian. He is concerned with the profound mystery of personhood and with the spiritual power that a sense of his own individuality and freedom confers upon the individual. Emerson's regard for the supremacy of the individual's moral nature, his belief in the immanence of Deity, in some sense, are accepted by Protestantism everywhere, but these ideas were so stated in The Divinity School Address as to alarm most of Emerson's Christian audience, Unitarians included. "It was thought that he had attempted to dethrone and debase Christianity, and an earnest controversy followed, in which Emerson was most violently condemned." Emersonians claimed in rebuttal that "his perception of the mind of Christ proved him not a worse, but a better, follower than most Christians are."

Emerson addressed the Harvard Senior Class in Divinity on Sunday evening, July 15, 1838, at the request of the students, not of the faculty. In his Journal for March, 1838, he mentions his desire to show these students how the "ugliness and unprofitableness" of the prevailing theology failed to represent "the glory and sweetness of the moral nature." The address offended conservative belief and aroused a minor controversy in the lay and religious press. In this controversy Emerson himself took no part, referring to it as "a storm in a washbowl." However, he replied to a letter from his predecessor as pastor at the Second Church of Boston, the Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., in a memorable statement of the transcendental method of knowing. Part of his statement follows:

> I have always been from my very incapacity of methodical writing, a "chartered libertine," free to worship and free to rail; lucky when I could make myself understood, but never esteemed near enough to the institutions and mind of society to deserve the notice of the masters of literature

> and religion. . .I could not give account of myself, if challenged. I could not possibly give you one of the "arguments" you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands. For I do not know what arguments mean in reference to any expression of a thought. I delight in telling what I think, but if you ask how I dare say so, or why it is so, I am the most helpless of mortal men. I do not even see that either of these questions admits of an answer.

The paragraph beginning "These facts" (p. 72, Rinehart edition) may clarify some of the ways in which Emerson is, in this essay, a chartered libertine. "Good is positive. Evil is merely privative, not absolute: it is like cold, which is the privation of heat. All evil is so much death or nonentity." Emerson here plainly accepts the "odious fact" of evil, but he does not regard evil as a "positive" in the sense defined by logic. Positives are absolute expressions of being. "Good" is one of them, a state of positive existence, to which "evil" is only a "privative," depriving good of some measure of its being. Good could be complete, but evil could not; if the deprivation (or evil) became complete, there would result "nonentity," neither good nor evil but nothingness.

> "Benevolence is absolute and real. So much benevolence as a man hath, so much life hath he. For all things proceed out of this same spirit, which is differently named love, justice, temperance, in its difference applications, just as the ocean received different names on the several shores which it washes. All things proceed out of the same spirit, and all things conspire with it. Whilst a man seeks good ends, he is strong by the whole strength of his nature. In so far as he roves from these ends, he bereaves himself of power, or auxiliaries; his being shrinks out of all remote channels, he becomes less and less, a mote, a point, until absolute badness is absolute death."

The passage beginning with "Good is positive. . ." is in the nature of a clarification of the core of Emersonian philosophy. Emerson's system is a monism which sees no conflict, in the strict sense, between good and evil; evil is a mere negation, a minus quantity. Emerson's belief, hence, allows for no struggle between God and the Devil, because the Devil is a "nonentity"; that is, he does not exist. This is perhaps the center of Emerson's heterodoxy, a heterodoxy actually implied in both Platonic and Christian Platonic thought from the beginning.

Emerson also denies the special character of Biblical miracles and the special divinity of Christ (p. 75, Rinehart edition): "He spoke of miracles; for he felt than man's life was a miracle, and all that man doth, and he knew that this daily miracle shines as the character ascends. But the word Miracle, as pronounced by Christian churches, gives a false impression; it is Monster. It is not one with the blowing clover and the falling rain." This entire paragraph represents the extreme limit of Emerson's radicalism, a denial of the miraculous and special divinity of Jesus Christ. Beginning with the Unitarian "unity" of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (as contrasted with the Trinitarian view), he builds the argument early in this paragraph: Jesus Christ was God incarnate, the divine Jesus was also man; therefore another man, by being true to the God incarnate in him, may also be "divine" in the sense that Jesus was. The divinity of Christ was a miracle only as all things are--"the blowing clover and the falling rain." Later transcendentalists in many cases accepted Emerson's position. A few advanced clergymen "proclaimed the divinity of man"--the phrase appears on the tombstone of William Ellery Channing--but in 1838 it was a Unitarian "heresy." Others, who were not considered so advanced, did not hesitate to express their disenchantment with this Concord iconoclast.

In the Divinity School address, Emerson applied to general religion the principles he had already stated in Nature. The keynote, essentially, is the divinity of man. Emerson wrote, "The true divinity dwells elsewhere, in the soul of man; and that divinity must rule the world and not be ruled by it." Such, in briefest terms, was Emerson's gospel.

D. Compensation:

Content: Emerson often makes a generalization and then illustrates his idea with specific examples. He has arrived at these generalizations, of course, through some kind of inductive approach--through finding a large variety of specific experiences in which the generalization seems to have intuitive support. We do not find this operation taking place in Compensation; instead, we find him beginning with the generalization and then proceeding to show us a number of instances in which it applies and has the support of intuition. An even more characteristic quality of his style in this essay is his use of analogy. One can prove nothing by the use of analogy; however, it is a very helpful rhetorical device by means of which general, abstract, ethereal ideas are made concrete. Emerson seldom makes any metaphorical statements--at least none of them is very original--but when your students examine the four essays in detail they will find a good many analogies used rhetorically to promote a species of religious insight.

Emerson begins Compensation by telling of his experience of listening to a clergyman whose sermon was based upon the values of the market place. According to the sermon, judgment is not executed in this world: the wicked are successful and the good are often miserable, but the sermon went on, in fairly un-Christian terms, to imply that the good envied the wicked their sins and that when the good got to heaven they could sin there as the wicked sin in this world. Emerson condemns this kind of reasoning, not on orthodox Christian grounds, but on the grounds that judgment is executed in this world--not the judgment of the marketplace, of course, but a truer judgment, the judgment of the private citizen himself. Emerson assures us that men are wiser than the theology preached to them, that their immediate, intuitive perception informs them that judgment is executed in this world.

After this introduction, Emerson proceeds to indicate the path of the law of compensation. He uses a series of analogies to make evident the nature of this law. For example, he develops the principle of polarity--that each element in nature has its opposite: heat and cold, male and female, centrifugal and centripetal. He says that the entire system of things gets represented in every particle--an echo of the Over-Soul. In the animal kingdom, no creatures are favorites, but a certain compensation balances every gift and every defect. The theory of the mechanic forces is another example: What we gain in power we lose in time, and this same dualism, he says, underlies the nature and conditions of man. To illustrate his assertion, Emerson says that every excess causes a defect, every defect an excess. If a man gains great wealth, he pays for it in the responsibility which wealth imposes upon him. The President in the White House loses his anonymity in payment for his position. If the criminal law is too severe, juries will not convict. If the government is too despotic, it is overthrown. This duality of which Emerson speaks is actually a unity; privilege and responsibility, gift and defect, good and evil are in reality opposite sides of the same entity. Thus "the true doctrine of omnipresence is that God reappears with all his parts in every moss and cobweb." If there is good, there is evil. All things are moral. "Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed--the one from the other; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means, the fruit in the seed." Those men who would divide the two opposites of a single unit one from the other can never succeed; they would have their senses gratified without damaging their spirit. Emerson says, "The soul says, have dominion over all things to the ends of virtue; the body would have the power over things to its own ends." However, according to Emerson, "Life invests itself with inevitable conditions, which the unwise seek to dodge" but cannot because the unity of all aspects of life prevails.

To support this contention that the unity of life cannot be separated, Emerson refers to the examples of Greek mythology--tales which in every instance act out the impossibility of man's separating the one aspect of the unit from the other. He says that the voice of mythic fable has something of the divine in it--that it came from thought above the will of the writer. This thought is, of course, a reaffirmation of Emerson's belief in the power of the immediate intuitive perception--the writer writes more wisely than he knows. Emerson also quotes a number of proverbs from several nations to show that these, also, containing the wisdom of civilizations, reveal the same truths as the myths. Students should, of course, be asked to compare Emerson's conception of the uses of myth with the uses they have explored in their study of them in grades 7 through 10.

Emerson says that those would would separate or try to separate the two sides of man's dual unity in order to enjoy the one and disregard the other cannot escape justice, and Emerson characterizes the impossibility of avoiding the compensatory in life with a series of "proverbs" and "antitheses" of his own: "Our will is over-mastered and characterized above our will by the law of nature." "A man cannot speak but he judges himself." With his will or against his will he draws his portrait to the eye of his companions by every word." "The exclusionist in religion does not see that he shuts the door of heaven upon himself, in striving to shut out others." "All infractions of love and equity in our social relations are speedily punished. They are punished by Fear."

The law of compensation operates in those humble affairs of life where maxims are applied. Thus Emerson asserts that when the relations between us and another person are not honest, the other shrinks from us and comes to hate us. His hate is our punishment. The more and the longer a man is dishonest, the greater is the debt he will have to pay to regain his honesty, his respect for himself. Everything has its price: a man who wants a good name must pay every claimant just as a man who wants a good garden must pay his gardener a rightful wage. A man who loves his fellows is, in return, loved; a man who persecutes another man or becomes a member of a mob pays the price of these acts by losing all that makes man a man and makes himself a beast.

Near the end of Compensation, Emerson proceeds beyond the external events where the law of compensation and the maxims and myths which display it apply: "There is a deeper fact in the soul than compensation, to wit, its own nature. The soul is not a compensation, but a life. The soul is." "Existence, or God, is not a relation or part, but the whole." "There is no penalty to virtue; no penalty to wisdom; they are the proper additions of being. In a virtuous action I properly am; in a virtuous act I add to the world; I plant into deserts conquered for Chaos and Nothing and see the darkness receding on the limits of the horizon." On the other hand, the man without virtue carries the malignity and lie within himself and thereby diminishes from nature and narrows his world. This is his compensation. Notice that this is merely a restatement of Emerson's doctrines concerning the positive nature of the good and the logical "non-existence" of evil ("Evil is the deprivation of good") which students have studied in the Divinity School Address.

Emerson refutes the statements of the clergyman whom he used as an example in his introduction by endeavoring to show, in Compensation, that as a man grows into an understanding of nature, lives according to its laws, and fulfills his own potentiality as a human being, thus far does he enlarge himself. By implication he also suggests that the man who denies the laws of nature, seeks to circumvent them and tries to evade the responsibilities of a human being reduces, compromises, and diminishes his own soul. Emerson says nothing about the punishment or prizes which civil authorities, society, or the church may award either the bad or good man. He makes it clear that all these matters are handled within the individual conscience of each man, and each man thus becomes his own destroyer or his own creator.

In teaching this essay, the teacher may find it useful to proceed from an analysis of Emerson's use of analogy to open up religious insight to his use of maxims and myths. Students may then compare how each of these devices allows Emerson to give a kind of solidity to what he says.

E. Walden:

Style: Walden is much more obviously an "autobiography" and a little less obviously "spiritual" than are Emerson's essays. The following remarks are directed toward calling attention to the concreteness of Thoreau's style and the subtlety of his meaning:

> I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, to discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear;nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms; and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; and if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursions. (Chapter II, "What I lived for," p.66).

This passage provides an excellent representation of Thoreau's essential style. When he said that he wished to live life deliberately, he said that he wished to live life as a thinking man and not as a robot. But just now let us consider the style. Here we find his use of sharp, concrete words. He said to front the essential facts of life--not to confront, a more scholarly but less arresting word. To suck the marrow of life is direct, terse, and gives a sharp image. Marrow is the very best word here, for marrow we know is the material and place in which the body's blood is manufactured. These sharp concrete, one-syllabled words do not take us astray into the somewhat flatulent generalizations which Emerson so often wrote. To cut a broad swath and to shave close: these are not images of the scholarly life; rather, they are the direct language of the farmer, the man who deals most directly with nature. The words sturdily and Spartan-like also give us a feeling of the direct simplicity of his style.

Thoreau was fourteen years younger than Emerson. As a member of the graduating class, Thoreau must have heard Emerson deliver his "The American Scholar" at Harvard in 1837. Emerson first referred to Thoreau in his Journals in 1838 as follows: "My good Henry Thoreau made this else solitary afternoon sunny with his simplicity and clear perception." To Emerson, Thoreau must have seemed a perfect realization of the scholar, a man thinking, educated by books, action, and nature. Thoreau's relation to Emerson was that of a disciple--he liked and absorbed many of Emerson's ideas. There are in fact many passages in Thoreau's writings which are echoes of Emerson. However, the styles of the two men were quite different. Emerson recognized both Thoreau's debt and his originality when he remarked: "I am very familiar with all his thoughts--they are my own, quite originally dressed." And he went on to say, "Thoreau illustrates by excellent images that which I should have conveyed in sleepy generality." To see the differences between the two men's styles, take F. O. Mathiessen's comparison of a few passages: [1]

Emerson	Thoreau
Traveling is a fool's paradise. Our first journeys discover to us the indifference of places.	I would rather watch the motion of cows in the Concord pasture, than wander to Europe or Asia and watch other motions there, for it is only ourselves that we report in either case.

Both men are commenting on Travel, but Emerson's style is general, containing few words in it which impress our memories. On the other hand, notice Thoreau's style. Here we have the specific, the concrete, the image of the cows in Concord pasture. Let us compare another pair of statements:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticisms. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?	The way in which men cling to old institutions after the life has departed out of them, and out of themselves, reminds me of those monkeys which cling by their tails,--eye, whose tails contract their limbs, even the dead limbs, of the forest, and they hang suspended beyond the hunter's reach long after they are dead. It is of no use to argue with such men. They have not an apprehensive intellect, but merely, as it were, a prehensile tale.

Again Emerson's statements are wise and have an elegance, yet notice how much more strongly Thoreau's image of the monkeys' hanging by their tails is likely to stay in our memory after catching our attention during our first reading. Students should be asked to make frequent similar comparisons between roughly analogous passages in Thoreau and Emerson.

In his command of language, Thoreau achieved an unusual clarity and depth. Stanley Edgar Hyman makes this claim for Thoreau's style: "At his best he wrote the only first-rate prose ever written by an American, with the possible exception of Abraham Lincoln." Thoreau's intense concern with his craft is indicated by the fact that when he made a list in his Journal under the heading "My Faults,"all seven items listed were faults of his prose style. Thoreau's sentences have the strength of oak and the precision of his sharp ax. His wisdom, his boldness of generalization, and his love of paradox make many of his literal statements unusually arresting. His statement that "Most men live lives of quiet desperation" is one such; another is his definition of a philosopher as one who so loves wisdom as to live by her dictates. Here is another: "in the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, they had better aim at something high." In addition, he, like Emerson, uses analogies, metaphors, symbols, and little myths or parables effectively. For example, here are two analogies from his discussion of the unimportance of clothes: "Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives," and another, "When a soldier is hit by a cannon-ball, rags are as becoming as purple." Again, recall the little parable about the Indian and his baskets and Thoreau's addition to it, that he himself had had occasion to weave some baskets and had thought them worth the weaving, even though there was no market for them. Perhaps the best-known such story is the little myth beginning, "I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travelers I have spoken to concerning them. . ." and before he is through, his symbolic quest is a quest for a human being. The little story conveys a powerful suggestion of man's disappointments, of his loss of Eden, of an irrecoverable Golden Age. Consider one more example of another type: surely every attentive reader is arrested by the statement that "the alert. . . remember the sun rose clear." On the face of it, this appears to be merely a statement of fact; but, having had our attention arrested, perhaps without knowing why, we recognize the life-giving power in the symbol of the sunrise.

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[1] F. O. Matthiessen, The American Renaissance, pp. 157-166, et passim.

Structure and Content: "Economy" is an essay not on economics but on the economic utilization of one's time and energy. The organization of the essay is quite simple and, for an essay so full of observations on so many subjects, very orderly. The introductory pages establish Thoreau's form of address to the reader (ethos), his subject, his reason for pursuing it, and his suggestion that man must rid himself of unnecessary encumbrances. This suggestion brings up the problem of what are the necessaries of life; Thoreau accepts as necessary food, clothing, shelter, and fuel--all necessary for keeping the body warm, for retaining the vital animal heat (page 13, Signet edition). Then he turns to his own situation, having already discussed the general situation of others, and tells what he has been doing in the way of faithfully minding his own business prior to his Walden experience. He gives us his reasons for and the circumstances of his taking up the solitary life, then turns to a picture of his attitude toward the four necessities.

In treating the necessities, Thoreau first discusses clothing, saying very little about his own but bringing in a wealth of material from observation and reading. He scorns the pretensions and hypocrisy which men practice in the matter of dress and admits, as a test of clothing's importance, only its utility in holding warmth and covering nakedness (pp. 19-23). He next discusses shelter (pp. 23-24), giving two partial accounts of his own building of his hut. He protests against the division of labor because it denies all creativity in the worker and thus degrades both him and his labor by robbing the consumer of beauty. Beauty in architecture can come only out of necessity, out of the needs of people's lives, so that a man's shelter becomes an outward symbol of his inner life. (Notice how like Emerson's attitude toward the body and the faculties Thoreau's attitude toward housing is.) Thoreau goes from the building to its occupant, from a consideration of the sheltering of students at Harvard to an examination of the purposes of an educational institution, an examination of the inadequacies of a curriculum that bears no relation to the experiences of daily living. The building is the facade of the temple of Wisdom. Food is the next topic of discussion (pages 41-49), and Thoreau tells how he planted and hoed his beans, how he considered that most men become slaves to animal labor, how he considered public works and monuments and memorials, concluding that work of the mind or spirit is a much more fitting memorial to man than is a pile of hammered stone.

Walden passes over any discussion of fuel (perhaps because, though necessary, it does not cause serious dislocations in men's lives) and devotes the pages which might go to fuel to furniture. Furniture is not one of the four necessities; but, Thoreau says, in these days, when the material for simple chairs is so readily available, no one need sit on a pumpkin. Then, in the closing section (pages 51-58), Thoreau draws his conclusions and answers some carping objections. Thoreau has shown how "economy" is an "outer," the expression of the inner poverty or wealth which is ours (cf. "Oversoul" above).

It is important to heed Thoreau's address to the reader at the very beginning of Walden, for it is his attempt to establish the right relation between reader and writer, to establish the writer's ethos and to awaken the proper emotion in the reader (pathos). He says there that the I, the first person, omitted in most books, will be retained in his. This is his frank yet sly way of saying that he will be more honest than most writers; for, as he says, "it is. . . always the first person that is speaking," after all, "though we do not commonly remember that it is." Then he writes what may seem to be an apology for his fault: "I would not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well. Unfortunately, I am confined to this theme by the narrowness of my experience." This is a gracious apology for his egotism and the narrowness of his theme, if the reader requires an apology (that is, if the shoe fits, wear it). However, Thoreau feels no need to apologize on either count; what he is aware of, as an artist, is the necessity to lure the reader into his confidence--to get the reader to accept as personal communication what might otherwise be taken for public oratory addressed to multitudes (cf. "Afterword" by Perry Miller, p. 252, Signet edition).

"Economy" is, like Emerson's essays, spiritual autobiography; it is more subtly autobiographical than the later chapters in Walden. As early as 1841, four years after Harvard, Thoreau had announced, "I want to go soon and live away by the pond." The insertion of the word away in that sentence expresses the strong yearning he felt for solitude--for time to be away from the world's interruptions and demands in order to face life and ponder what was valuable in it. In 1845 he did go to Walden Pond and lived there for twenty-six months. Then he left Walden and returned to Concord, saying that he had learned what he went there to learn and that he now had other lives to live. The book which came out of his experiment in living matured and ripened in his mind and in his inkwell for seven years before it was published in 1854. During those seven years he enriched the book by compressing the experiences of twenty-six months into the frame of a single year and by organizing it around the cycle of the seasons, progressing through summer and autumn to the corpse-cold pallor of winter, coming finally to a climax in the renascence of spring. He also wove into the book various materials from his Journal for the preceding fifteen years.

Thoreau says (p. 18) that his purpose in going to the pond to live was "to transact some private business"; that is, he wished to create for himself an exemplary life--to be able, so to speak, to write an exemplary autobiography. Throughout several preceding pages he drops hints as to the nature of his private business. He is disturbed that the lives of his fellow townsmen seem not worth living; they seem to be "doing penance" and living "lives of quiet desperation." When he inquires why this is so, and whether it must be so, he can find no satisfactory answers, either from men or from books. "I have lived some thirty years on this planet," he writes, "and I have yet to hear the first syllable of valuable or even earnest advice from my seniors." He strongly suspects that the disparity between the promise and the fulfillment of life, for most people, lies in their having adopted a misleading set of values. Yet, to say blankly to his neighbors, "Your values are all wrong," could only bring rebuffs. Hence, he must win them by gradually weaning them away to something better, by pointing out that life does have fine fruits to offer, by noticing that most men are too occupied with factitious cares and coarse labor to be able to gather life's fruits: "The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly." When he says that even the unencumbered "find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh," we know that the finer fruits are to be found in each individual life and that they are to be won by self-discipline and care. Each man is encouraged to think himself something better than a tool or a slave: "What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate" (cf. "Self-Reliance"). Nor need any one think that his case is hopeless or that there is a better time than now, for "alert and healthy natures remember that the sun rose clear." It is not only that each new day is a new beginning, a rebirth, but also that the sun rose this morning, just as it rose countless mornings before and will continue to rise countless mornings to come. This passage is an invitation to relate one's inner life to the universal laws of nature, of which each human nature is a part, only "a different edition of the same work"; this idea is made more explicit in the following passage: "We might try our lives by a thousand simple tests; as, for example, that the same sun which ripens my beans illumines at once a system of earths like ours. . . The stars are the apexes of what wonderful triangles!"

The General Structure of "Walden": Insofar as time will allow, the student should read Walden in much the same way as he reads a sonnet or a short poem like "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." He should have been alerted to suspect that a poem may have subtle things to say and subtle ways of saying them, things discoverable through an examination of such elements as structure, imagery, and figures. When the student has apprehended a meaningful structure encompassing a human experience, he comes to a meaning whose scope and significance so overshadows the original direct statement as almost to erase it (cf. 7th grade, Meaning of Stories). This is the kind of reading experience that Walden was meant to afford the reader. One can approach this multi-level reading by first considering the part nature plays in Walden. Thoreau was a close observer and accurate recorder of natural phenomena, and his book is a valuable source of information. That is one level of its meaning. But Thoreau was not a scientist. The scientist is disinterested and objective; Thoreau is always "interested" and usually subjective, mingling his feelings in the record. The scientist is factual; Thoreau entered areas where fact is unattainable and speculation is scientifically unprofitable. Like a romantic poet, Thoreau treats nature with imagination and feeling. While watching the battle between the black and red ants in "Brute Neighbors" (chapter 12), he was, he said, "excited somewhat even as if they had been men." Here, as elsewhere in his nature descriptions, Thoreau establishes a reciprocal relation between himself and the things observed. A fine example of this reciprocity is the amusing account of his game of hide and seek with the loon, also from "Brute Neighbors": "a pretty game played on the smooth surface of the pond." The blending together of feeling, imagination, and reciprocity with fact not only distinguishes Thoreau from the scientist but also gives to his writing a unique distinction in literature. Nature in Walden has more than poetic importance; it has philosophical importance as well. Since technology and the growth of cities have divorced man from nature, the question may well be asked, "Can man thrive in a state of separation from this great elemental source of sanity and strength?" Probably we shall have to wait for the anthropologists to give a definitive answer. However, Thoreau not only raises the question but shows how man can re-establish vital contact with a world of which he used to be a part and from which he has been estranged, to his own peril, by the conditions of modern living. Thus, Walden is, on one level, a literal record of one man's experience but, at another level, a symbolic record of a search for rebirth in harmony with natural cycles and laws, a larger meaning which will be missed by the reader who dismisses the book with the remark, "I don't want to live in a one-room shack."

The larger meaning of Walden is related to Thoreau's effort to describe a symbolic or exemplary rehabilitation. Norman Holmes Pearson has called it "an extended metaphor of living." Sherman Paul (University of Illinois) and Leo Stoller (Wayne State University), in discussing Walden, emphasize Thoreau's devotion to self-culture. Both analyze the imagery and symbolism of the book without applying a specific metaphorical concept to the book as a whole. William Drake (University of Arizona) says this: "Walden has for structure an elaborated metaphor. It is that of the traveler who, instead of leaving home, explores the very ground he lives on." This means that the entire book is embraced within the metaphor of an exploration--the age-old metaphor of a quest; the object of the quest, the constant theme of the book, is that of spiritual awakening, which appears in metaphor in almost every chapter. Stanley Edgar Hyman (Bennington College) and F. O. Matthiessen (Harvard University) carry matters a step farther. Hyman speaks for both of them in this sentence: "F. O. Matthiessen, [1] probably the best critic we have devoting himself to American literature, has claimed that Thoreau's power lies precisely in his recreation of basic myth, in his role as a protagonist in a great cyclic ritual drama." Thus, Hyman sees Walden as a vast re-birth ritual, the purest and most complete in our literature.

These highly figurative interpretations may seem to have lost contact with the verbal reality of Thoreau's book. Yet, when Thoreau compressed his twenty-six month experience into the compass of a year's time, he achieved much more than economy and artistic unity. The far more important result of that compression was that Thoreau had, immediately available for use, the four seasons--with their recurrent pattern of growth, decay, and rebirth--as a metaphor for life. This is the strategic metaphor that controls both the structure and the meaning of Walden. Whether we use Drake's language of the quest (whose objective is spiritual awakening) or Hyman's language of the ritual of rebirth, we are talking about the same thing. Thoreau used the cycle of the year as a metaphor for his life at Walden Pond and for the life of every man, a metaphor for the entire history of humankind, and a metaphor for the subjective day, which also has its seasons, from its springtime rebirth at dawn to its going down to death in the winter of darkness. Being aware of this great metaphor, tremendous in its scope and variety of applications, should make Walden more meaningful to any reader; certainly it should make him more aware of the closely-knit relationships among the chapters. As Hyman says, "on the metaphor of the organic processes of birth, growth, decay, and rebirth out of decay, Thoreau organizes his whole life and experience."

You will be able to follow Thoreau's extended metaphor by recognizing the specific symbols and images which are part of it. "The sun is Thoreau's key symbol, and all of Walden is a development of the ambiguities of the sun imagery" (Hyman, p. 27). According to Hyman, Walden begins with this theme: "Alert and healthy natures remember that the sun is but a morning star." The sun gives life, purifies, and hastens decay: "Rebirth rituals operate characteristically by means of fire, ice, and decay, but we are staggered by the amount and variety of these in the book. We see Thoreau build his shanty of boards which he has first purified in the sun, record approving an Indian purification ritual of burning all the tribe's old belongings and provisions, and later go off into a description of the way he is cleansed and renewed by his own fireplace. We see him note the magic purity of the ice on Walden Pond, the fact that frozen water never turns stale, and the rebirth involved when the ice breaks up and

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[1] The American Renaissance

'Walden was dead and is alive again.'"[1]

Thoreau's rebirth to a life in harmony with nature is realized in the sun breaking through the mist. Walden explores every kind of decay--rotting ice, decaying trees, carrion, tainted meat, corrupted society--and everywhere the sun "resurrects" a new harmonious life from the decay. But, if the book offers us graves and coffins as symbols, it also pictures a consequent rising from them; if it treats of wombs, it treats of emergence from them; and it ends with the fable of a live insect, "a strong and beautiful bug," resurrected from an egg long buried in the wood of an old table. Walden begins with a practical plan for ordering one's life in "Economy"; it concludes with an enthusiastic symbolic prediction of what one may expect from life in the fable of the bug and of the Artist of Kouroo. We may explore how it proceeds from the one to the other.

Much of Walden is a symbolic protest against those unnatural factors of life which would restrict spontaneous individuality and spontaneous rapport with nature, restrictions from which Thoreau would see men freed as they are "reborn," to use the terms of his general metaphor. Thoreau believed that the social standards of New England, especially of Concord, were dominated by mercantilism of the most flagrant kind. But his protest is different from that of the Tory satirists. They protest against commercialism in the name of tradition, in the name of pre-mercantile, agrarian, almost feudal social conceptions. Thoreau's protest is solipsistic. He grants that the life of a civilized people is "an institution" in which the life of the individua is to a great extent absorbed in order to preserve and perfect that of the race. But he insists that it is essential to re-examine the terms under which that absorption is being made, to see whether the individual is not being ruthlessly sacrificed to the dictates of a mean-spirited commercialism. Because there is so much concern for the material in Concord and New England, Thoreau takes to the woods to find out just how much of the material world a man needs to sustain life, just how much of his precious time he must give to the drudgery of producing his material needs. The core of his ideas respecting that matter is found in "Economy."

Chapter 2, "What I Lived For," emphasizes two ideas--simplify your material needs and live thoughtfully. Respecting the simple life, he says, "Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary, eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion." Again he says, "We are determined to be starved before we are hungry. Men say that a stitch in time saves nine, and so they take a thousand stitches today to save nine tomorrow." And again: "When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of reality." Thoreau makes clear that a man cannot think clearly or deeply unless he has the time to think. He says that we have no real work to do but that we suffer a sort of St. Vitus dance of useless physical activity. When we have the time to think, we perceive how little our physical needs are and how little of our life it is necessary to give to satisfying these needs. Moreover, when we have time to think we have the opportunity to see what is truly valuable and what is only time-wasting. His final paragraph of this chapter contains both the thought and the beauty of his writing:

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[1] "Henry Thoreau in Our Time" (Thoreau: A Century of Criticism, Walter Harding, ed., 1954).

> "Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars. I cannot count one. I know not the first letter of the alphabet. I have always been regretting that I was not as wise as the day I was born. The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and forepaws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine."

"Where I Lived and What I Lived For" is concerned not only with simplicity but with such simplicity as allows one to see the eternal symbolized in the temporal, the general in the special.

Chapter 3, "Reading," suggests that if a man is ever to know the best that has been thought and said, he must have time to read. From antiquity to the present time, there have been only a few great minds out of the millions of men who have lived. These are the minds which have examined life acutely, "driven it into a corner," where what it truly is may be known. And in every age there have been only a few good minds which have absorbed this wisdom, have used it to shape their own points of view, to determine their own values, to sight their own goals. In his time Thoreau was one of these. He refused to let his life be "frittered away with detail." He went to the woods to think upon the wisdom to be found in great books. As we examine this chapter of Walden, we find him speaking of some of the writers and thinkers who had something important to say to him and who may have something important to say to students and teachers if they will but listen. The writers are Homer, Aeschylus, Virgil, Dante, and Shakespeare; the thinkers are Zoroaster and Plato. Notice how these writers, like the writers whom Emerson lists in the "Oversoul" essay, provide allegories, correlatives for the central religious or moral experiences. Thoreau read these in their own languages, not in translations. He read the Vedas and Zendavestas and the Hebrew scriptures. He had something very much worthwhile to think about, and he had made it possible to have the time to think. In this chapter we find an echo of Emerson when Thoreau says, "The oldest Egyptian or Hindoo philosopher raised a corner of the veil from the statue of divinity; and still the trembling robe remains raised, and I gaze upon as fresh a glory as he did, since it was I in him that was then so bold, and it is he in me that now reviews the vision. No dust has settled on the robe; no time has elapsed since that divinity was revealed." This is a beautiful way of telling us that truth is eternal; it does not change with time. Truth is as fresh for each new generation as it was for the generation which made the original discovery.

"The Bean Field" presents man thinking. For Thoreau, the cultivation of the bean field was not an end in itself. Incidentally, it provided him with a large part of his daily food, but more directly it became the agent to stimulate some profound thinking. Anyone who reads this chapter for practical agricultural hints is likely to be disappointed--although there are indeed some practical hints in it. His relation with his bean field is that of man consorting with a great elemental source of sanity and strength. Thoreau wrote, "I came to love my rows, my beans. . . They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus."[1] Although Thoreau confesses that he planted more rows of beans than he really wanted or needed and became slightly enslaved to their care, he says, "But labor of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness." What are his thoughts as he hoes his beanfield? How do they differ from the thoughts of any ordinary farmer--if there are any farmers left who hoe their bean rows by hand? He writes, "As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens, and their small implements of war and hunting were brought to the light of this modern day." Here is man thinking of his place in the flow of history, relating himself to the past. As he attacks the rank growth of wormwood, pigweed, and sorrel, he thinks, "Many a lusty crest-waving Hector, that towered a whole foot above his crowding comrades, fell before my weapon and rolled in the dust." The Trojan War is in his thoughts. And further he writes, "I said to myself, I will not plant beans and corn with so much industry another summer, but such seeds, if the seed is not lost, as sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like, and see if they will not grow in this soil, even with less toil and manurance, and sustain me, for surely it has not been exhausted for these crops." Here he is concerned not with the bean crop but with the crop of men, the next generation which needs to be better than his own.

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[1] cf. the Hercules myth.

Thoreau compares the agriculture of his own time with that of the ancients and finds his own time too hurried, too anxious to reap a large crop materially. He thinks of how mythology and ancient poetry suggest that once husbandry was a sacred art. He laments the fact that in his own day no festival, no procession, no ceremony celebrate the sacred practice of cultivating the earth. He says that the modern farmer sacrifices not to Ceres, but to Plutus, the guardian of wealth. With us the soil is cultivated as a means for man to gain more property, the landscape is deformed, husbandry is degraded, and the farmer leads the meanest of lives. Thus, the bean field for Thoreau is more than a means of making a living; it is a way of living through thinking, through considering man's place in the current of history, and seeing how much modern man, in comparison with ancient man, has become separated from the virtue which comes to the man who cultivates the soil religiously.

Chapter 8, "The Village," is the shortest chapter in Walden. Man in society did not interest Thoreau very much, and his attitude toward society is much like Emerson's in "Self-Reliance." It is interesting to notice with what words and images Thoreau writes of his visit to the village. He writes, "As I walked in the woods to see the birds and squirrels, so I walked in the village to see the men and boys; instead of wind among the pines I heard the cart rattle." He compares the colony of muskrats with the village of busy men. When he describes the main street of Concord, he images it as a kind of viewing gallery, with the visitor having to "run the gauntlet" between the two lines of observers. And how does he think of himself? In avoiding the lures of the shops, he compares himself with Orpheus avoiding the sirens: "Sometimes I bolted suddenly, and nobody could tell my whereabouts, for I did not stand upon gracefulness, and never hesitated at a gap in the fence." We get the image of a wild colt, unused to the restrictions of the town, a Thoreau quick to escape from the village that would tame him. In this chapter Thoreau refers to the time when he went to the village and was seized and put into jail (the next essay will discuss this incident fully): "Wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions; and, if they can, constrain him to belong to their desperate odd-fellow society. . . . I might have resisted forcibly with more or less effect, might have run 'amok' against society, but I preferred that society should run 'amok' against me, it being the desperate party."

Even though Thoreau calls this chapter "The Village," he cannot stay in town long. At least a third of the chapter is given to his reflections on the walk home at night and during a storm, when eyesight can serve very little. He reveals how sensitive he is to nature, how he often finds his way by sighting between two particular trees just eighteen inches apart or even by being able to detect with the soles of his feet the difference between a slight path and the open field. And these experiences, too, afford fodder to his thought and become emblems. He writes, "In our most trivial walks, we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands and if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighboring cape . . .and not till we are completely lost . . . do we appreciate the vastness of nature . . . Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations." This last sentence summarizes very well the core of Thoreau's thought. Man must free himself of the world, explore the pure spirit of himself, before he can know whether life is mean or good and how he must live.

It may be well to examine the structure into which the chapters on "Reading," "The Village," and "The Bean Field" fit. After "Solitude," Thoreau turns by way of contrast to his world again, specifically to his social obligations, to his duties to hospitality ("Visitors"), to a serviceable vocation ("The Bean Field"), to the collective community ("The Village"). These chapters may be regarded not only as exploring man's basic relationships with the "cosmos" but as providing Thoreau with means of escape from the self-centered, time-bound experience of ordinary men. In "Reading," the link with the past is established; in "Sounds," the link with nature; in "Solitude," with the "perennial source of life"; in "Visitors," with men of like mind; in "The Bean Field," with both civilized and half-civilized states, and in "The Village," with the community. The paradox is that these links were broken for Thoreau amid the quiet desperation of the community, that in solitude he was not so lonesome as in a depersonalized society, that only in comparative solitude could Thoreau see into the meaning of himself, society, nature, and the past and sympathize with them. However, the explorations which lead to the establishing of these links pale in importance before the link which is discovered as a result of Thoreau's longer walks in "Ponds" and his deeper meditation on the meaning of Walden, for here he receives an intuition that Walden is a symbol of the Deity, particularly of the divine image in himself. Walden thus becomes a sacramental link between man, God, and nature. "Baker Farm" looks to the regeneration of man in the presence of nature hallowed by God's breath, and "Higher Laws" describes the form of the regenerate life. By way of contrast, "Brute Neighbors" gives a picture of the violent brute existence which the regenerate man in part transcends, but which, nevertheless, remains part of man's true nature. This section of Walden, from "Solitude" to "Brute Neighbors," thus describes the process by which man's spiritual nature can rule and hallow his purely physical, material, and social ambitions, how spiritual ties of the new life can replace the physical ties of the old, how ultimately God, man, and nature are united in one spiritual continuum.

The section of Walden extending from "Brute Neighbors" to the end of the book recapitulates the spiritual journey in terms of seasonal imagery. The cold of winter recalls the old life for economic necessities the warmth of spring, the new life for the personal and divine necessities The cold of winter requires of Thoreau that even he dedicate more time to the amenities of living: to building a chimney, to plastering to shut himself off from nature, to gathering fuel. In this season, visitors are less frequent, though distinguished; the former inhabitants of the area are seen as failures, and some of the links between Thoreau and his fellow men seem to be breaking down. The recluse waits for the visitor who never comes. Nature sometimes appears desperate; the winter animals do not speak the familiar language of "Sounds." Even the Pond is less inviting, and Thoreau has to work at a scientific investigation of its layout to discover its spiritual meaning. These winter chapters indicate how one may be almost forced to live for the "necessities of life" instead of for "life," but they also indicate with what equinimity such life may be faced. Structurally, the winter chapters on visitors, animals, the house, and the pond parallel the summer chapters on the same subjects and dramatize how man may react to this same universe in the presence of physical and spiritual hardship. Finally, in "Spring," the regeneration which is *analyzed* and *described* in chapters IX - XII is now *dramatized* with a more poetic force: first, in the sun's symbolic thawing of the Pond, which originally gave Thoreau the intuition of the unity of man, God, and nature; then in the meditation on leaves, which symbolically gives Thoreau an insight into the spiritual unity of nature as it is driven by a life force. Last, Thoreau receives the mystical experience to which his meditations on nature have tended. He is reborn to a kind of Eden-like innocence (Chapter XVII). The dead vestiges of social conformity, materialism, and vanity are thrown off, and he rediscovers the innocent rapport with nature and God which man lost when he lost his innocence. In the "Conclusion," Thoreau defends his literary method and symbolizes once again the possibility of rebirth for all artists in the fable of the artist of Kouroo and for all society in the fable of the winged insect born out of the table made of apple-tree wood.

The Influence of Walden: *Walden* became the Bible for many of the leaders of the Labor Movement in England during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. When William Butler Yeats, alone in London, saw a little fountain in a shop window, he was reminded of his boyhood love of *Walden*. He went home and wrote the poem that started him on his way to fame.[1] When Tolstoy addressed his brief message to America in 1901 and urged us to rediscover the greatness of our writers, it was to *Walden* especially that he was referring. Even the late French novelist, Marcel Proust, one of the greatest of the century, said, "When one reads *Walden*, it seems to me, he reads of himself, all of his deepest and most intimate thoughts." Mahatma Ghandi, the great leader of the Indian people, used Thoreau's principles of letting the village run amok against him to resist the oppression of British rule. Ghandi's India, through its "self-reliance," ultimately won the right to self-rule. In the Southern United States, Negroes are using the same peaceful resistance with which Ghandi gained Indian freedom. Using Thoreau's principles and tactics, Martin Luther King and his disciples are slowly but surely winning their way against the segregation of the Negro race in the South.

F. "Civil Disobedience":

Our understanding of "Civil Disobedience" may be enhanced if we extend our previous remarks about social attitudes in Emerson and Thoreau.

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[1] "The Lake Isles of Innisfree"

Both Emerson and Thoreau consistently chose the moral rather than the political approach and set out to reform the world by opening men's eyes to their own potentialities rather than by changing social conditions. Thoreau felt that, because an internal moral revolution was actually within reach, it was a waste of energy to modify what was only external and was subject to change through outside influences. "There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root," he declared in Walden, "and it may be that he who bestows the largest amount of time and money on the needy is doing the most by his mode of life to produce that misery which he strives in vain to relieve." What Thoreau opposed to the acquisitive society was not another kind of society but an individual life devoted to the search for truth in the soul and in nature. His method was to teach by example, whereas Emerson's was through evangelism. Thoreau used his life as Emerson said the life of a great man should be used--as a "collyrium" (an eye-wash) to clear men's eyes and to suggest to them their own potentialities if they would only follow the bent of their own geniuses.

Thoreau withdrew from society in order to build that exemplary individual life. His life is a kind of conscious effort to create a historical exemplum which would work, like that of the epic hero in other cultures (cf. the Epic Form, grade 9), to stir a change in behavior. It is difficult to assess to what extent his withdrawal was a positive action taken in accordance with the generative forces of life and to what extent it was a denial of those forces. In "Self-Reliance," Emerson had described society as a conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members--as a joint-stock company in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. Man have interpreted Thoreau's withdrawal as his concession that the conspiracy had succeeded. He did grant that the life of a civilized people is, as he said, "an institution, in which the life of the individual is to a great extent absorbed, in order to preserve and perfect that of the race." To withdraw then, would mean, on Emerson's terms, surrender of one's liberty and his culture; but, on Thoreau's terms, it would simply mean taking steps to assure that the individual life would be absorbed to a lesser extent than is usual.

In Walden, "The Bean Field," Thoreau described the distant sounds that came to him while he hoed his beans or sat before his hut. One set of sounds he described with unusual detachment, but with an ominous undertone of irony--the sound of soldiers drilling on the village green two miles away. He wrote, "When there was a military turnout of which I was ignorant, I have sometimes had a vague sense all the day of some sort of itching and disease in the horizon, as if some eruption would break out there soon, until at length some more favorable puff of wind brought me information of the 'trainers.' It seemed by the distant hum as if somebody's bees had swarmed . . . And when the sound died quite away, and I knew that they had got the last drone of them all safely into the Middlesex hive . . . I felt proud to know that the liberties of Massachusetts and of our fatherland were in such safe keeping." But when he went to the village and saw soldiers drilling to go and fight the Mexican War, he was shocked. Soon thereafter occurred the famous incident that landed him in jail for a night. In "The Village," Thoreau says this incident occurred "near the end of the first summer"; actually, it was in July of the second summer, 1846. The confusion arises from the fact that Thoreau, in Walden, compressed the life of two years into the framework of a year's time. The Walden account was published some nine years after the event.

In "Civil Disobedience," which was delivered as a lecture within about eighteen months of the event, Thoreau is even less definite about the time. He says merely, "Some years ago, the State met me in behalf of the church, and commanded me to pay a certain sum--"; and then, a few lines later, "I have paid no poll-tax for six years. I was put into a jail once on this account, for one night." Thoreau was not writing for the historians; the time was of little consequence to him. What was important was the meaning the incident had, for him and for America. Nor was it important, though Thoreau voiced some indignation over it, that someone interfered by ~~paying his~~ tax, so that he was released the next morning: what was important was that he could go pick huckleberries, as he had originally planned, with his immortal soul, as well as his boot sole, in good repair.

Thoreau's "stirring up a hornet's nest" or "making a mountain out of a molehill" was not the result of "cussedness" or petulance; it was his way of using his life as an example to open men's eyes, an action required by his moral principles. Since his goal was to perfect his own soul, he felt that he must demonstrate that he was free of evil within by being certain that he sanctioned no evil outside himself. Such support was being given to the evil institution of slavery, Thoreau believed, by any person who in any way supported the governments of Massachusetts and the United States. For it was the United States whose Constitution sanctioned the existence of slavery and which was even then waging an unjust war against Mexico, and it was the government of Massachusetts which, by its membership in the Union, supported the Constitution and which was about to send its troops to support this war for the extention of slavery. Thoreau took it as his moral duty to refuse obedience to a government whose acts were unjust when measured by the higher law. This was the occasion that prompted him to interrupt his composing of Walden to think through and express his convictions about man's relations with the state in the essay, "The Duty of Civil Disobedience."

Taken by itself, Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" is an astonishing performance. The Yankee transcendentalist seems suddenly turned into a philosophical anarchist. At the beginning, he accepts Jefferson's motto, "That government is best which governs least," and pursues it to its logical and, to him, desirable conclusion: "That government is best which governs not at all." Then he writes, "When men are prepared for it, that is the kind of government which they will have." Thoreau's statement is, in fact, no more than transcendental individualism translated into politics, with all the easy compromises swept away. Its sources run straight back to eighteenth-century liberalism, with its doctrine of the minimized state--a state that must reduce its coercive sovereignity to the extent that the laws of society function without impediment. For Thoreau, the nub of the matter is in his statement, "Government is at best but an expedient." An expedient is a suitable means to an end; it serves (frequently in lieu of anything better) to accomplish a given result. If government is merely an expedient, then there is no guarantee that the means is honorable or equitable, nor is there any assurance that the desired end is good--that is, moral. To Thoreau, both the means and the end are evil. The means is the imperialistic war against Mexico; the ends are the seizure of territory and the extension of slavery into territories which had been proclaimed free.

Thoreau goes on to make the point that the expediency of government is executed through majority rule. It is particularly an outrage to his reason and his sense of justice that, in people's minds, majority rule is some kind of ikon with a halo around it, as though it had the sanction of divine authority in perpetuity. The majority, he says, can rule only because they are the strongest; and such rule cannot be based on justice, for a majority decision represents a compromise among the majority, which decision may have been corrupted by evil influence or self-interest or mere chance. The British political philosopher William Godwin had written in Political Justice, "The pretense of collective wisdom is the most palpable of all impostures." Thoreau may not have read Godwin, but he certainly holds the same view. He would also have agreed with Godwin's plea, "Give us equality and justice . . . Suffer us to follow without restraint the dictates of our own judgment, and to change our forms of social order as fast as we improve the dictates of our judgment." Neither thinker believes in an abstract state, society, or nation--only the individuals that compose them. Political expediency and the law of morality frequently clash; in such an event, it is the duty of the individual citizen to follow the higher law.

Having called attention to the practical and moral limitations of expediency in government, Thoreau documents them with several instances. His examples are not specific, local examples involving his neighbors, but general situations which he expects each listener or reader to test in the light of his own experience. He writes, "The law makes even the well-disposed daily agents of injustice." And on the following page, "The mass of men serve the State, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies. In most cases there is no free exercise whatever of the judgment or of the moral sense" (page 223, Signet edition). He is thinking of the soldier being sent to fight in Mexico (whether or not he believes in the cause), of the ordinary citizen in his daily life, of the government clerk or administrative assistant or customs official. "Others," Thoreau continues, "as most legislators, politicians, lawyers, ministers, and officeholders, serve the state chiefly with their heads; and as they rarely make any moral distinctions, they are as likely to serve the devil, without intending it, as God . . . . A very few, as heroes, patriots, martyrs, reformers in the good sense, and MEN, serve the State with their consciences also, and so necessarily resist it for the most part; and they are commonly treated by it as enemies. A wise man will only be useful as a man."

How does it become a man, Thoreau asks, to behave toward such a government--a government with such limited and ignoble aims and means and servants? He answers, "I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government, which is also the slave's government. When a sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and when a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize. What makes this duty more urgent is the fact that the country so over-run is not our own, but ours is the invading army." As an honest man, Thoreau feels that the time has come when the American people must face up to the biblical injunction against self-interest or complacency: "he who would save his life, shall lose it." As he put it, "This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people." On the subject of reform, he takes the position that it is the duty of the government, not of individual men, to change the state of things. But the men in government, standing completely within the law, never really behold it. They have no basis in the world at large from which to function as reformers. Among the citizenry, there is opposition to reform because men of influence have a greater interest in commerce and agriculture than in humanity. In addition, change is slow for two reasons: first, improvement is slow because the few are not materially wiser than the many (the ruling majority); second, the methods available to the citizenry for changing the law of the land, through the ballot box and constitutional amendment, are too cumbersome and unsure. As he put it, "As for adopting the ways which the state has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to." When he says, "I know not of such ways," Thoreau does not mean he is ignorant of them, but that, under the circumstances, he can not resort to them. The way provided in the Constitution is through an amendment requiring ratification by three-fourths of the states, and the numerical balance between slave and free states at the time was exactly even.

With respect to his own obligations as a reformer, Thoreau declares it is his right to live his own life according to his principles. He will not compromise with his conscience. When the law applies the principle of coercion and puts him in jail, he counters with the principle of passive resistance. On the right to deny that the existing evil is his responsibility, he speaks out boldly. He could have softened the blow and appeared much less pugnacious; but, individualist that he is, he leads with his chin: "it is not man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the eradications of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too." He is still on the same theme two pages later (p. 229)--the theme that it is a man's business first of all to live his life well, and then to make sure that nothing in his life gives support or sanction to any wrong outside it. He writes, "I came into this world not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad. A man has not everything to do, but something; and because he cannot do everything, it is not necessary that he should do something wrong."

Thoreau felt that to take a moral stand, as he did, was the strongest and most effective action an individual could take. He expressed his belief in moral force graphically when he equated the force of one honest man to that of a thousand unspecified men: "I know . . . that if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men, whom I could name,--ten honest men only,--aye if one HONEST man, in this state of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership, it would be the abolition of slavery in America. For it matters not how small the beginning may seem to be; what is once well done is done forever" (p. 230).

Thoreau is concerned with the same thoughts in the closing paragraphs of the essay, where he is speaking of the legislator, the Constitution, and a hoped-for better government. There, in speaking of the legislator, he uses the greatly-admired Webster as an example. Having paid tribute to his admirable qualities, Thoreau points out some of Webster's limitations: his true quality is not wisdom, but prudence; his truth is lawyer's truth, which is not really truth but a consistent expediency. And Thoreau is asking in effect, "What about the conscience of the legislator who holds it his highest moral obligation to defend a Constitution that sanctions slavery?" And he quotes Webster's equivocal stand on slavery, of which we shall give but one short sentence: "Because it was part of the original compact . . . let it stand." (Perhaps we should point out, parenthetically, that the Constitution nowhere mentioned the institution of slavery. It recognized it in two ways; first, it gave to Congress the power to end the importation of slaves, and the Congress did end it at its first opportunity, in 1808. And the Constitution recognized slavery in allowing three-fifths of the slaves, referred to anonymously as "all other persons," to be counted as free men for the purpose of representative apportionment. This provision, obviously, gave the slave states a political, in addition to an economic, interest in the protection and extension of slavery.) Now to return to principles:

With respect to his hope for a better government, Thoreau says, in the closing paragraph, that the authority of government is still impure; to be strictly just, it must have the sanction and consent of the governed. The "consent of the governed" is the language of the Declaration of Independence, not of the Constituion. Since the government has assumed authority over him to which he has not given consent Thoreau feels he has the right to question whether it is the best possible, whether it is worthy of or has a right to a man's total allegiance:

> Is a democracy, as we know it, the last improvement possible in government? Is it not possible to take a step further towards recognizing and organizing the rights of man? There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority

> are derived . . . I please myself with imagining a State at last which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose, if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, not embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A state which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious state, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen.

On two later occasions Thoreau was provoked to speak out on the subject of slavery. "Civil Disobedience"is the statement of a young man, a political novice. The night he spent in Concord jail was very near to his twenty-ninth birthday; he was thirty when he delivered the lecture; he was thirty-two when the essay was published in an ephermeral periodical that folded after the first issue. Neither the lecture nor the published essay created any stir at the time. That was in 1849. In 1850, Congress revised the Missouri compromise of 1820, making it much easier for a slave owner to retrieve his run-away slave and opening up free areas within the Louisiana Territory to slavery on an optional basis. The following year, in 1851, there was a fugitive slave case in Boston that attracted national attention. Thoreau, whose home had long been a regular station of the underground railway and who had personally helped more than one escaped slave to freedom in Canada, was incensed. He ~~prepared a speech~~ and went to an anti-slavery meeting at which Emerson spoke, but he was not given an opportunity to ~~speak.~~ In 1854, Congress repealed both Missouri Compromises and passed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which opened up all western territories to slavery on the basis of "squatter sovereignity." The day after the bill became law, an escaped Negro slave, Anthony Burns, who had been living and working in Boston for two years, was arrested by the police and claimed as his property by a Virginia slaveowner. Despite vehement protest meetings and mob violence organized by the abolitionists, despite the lack of legal evidence or identification, and despite Massachusetts law to the contrary, the governor of the state and the mayor of the city "sat on their hands" and allowed Burns to be illegally detained and then returned to slavery.

Thoreau prepared another speech, "Slavery In Massachusetts," and this one he delivered at the Anti-Slavery Convention in Framingham, Massachusetts, on July 4, 1854. He spoke out vehemently against the injustice in the case, against the failure to protect human rights ("The governor could at least have resigned himself into fame," he said.), and against the inadequacy of the laws to protect the individual. As always, Thoreau was motivated by principle, and principle gave his words conviction. Of the governor he said, "What I am concerned to know is that that man's influence and authority were on the side of the slaveholder, and not of the slave--of the guilty, and not of the innocent--of injustice, and not of justice." He recalled the events of three years before with dramatic irony: "Three years ago, just a week after the authorities of Boston assembled to carry back a perfectly innocent man, the inhabitants of Concord caused the bells to be rung and the cannons to be fired, to celebrate their liberty [in commemoration of the battles of Concord and Lexington]. As if those three millions had fought for the right to be free themselves, but to hold in slavery three million others . . . But now we have half buried that old shame under a new one." His last few sentences expressed quietly his bitter resignation to man's shame: "Slavery and servility have produced no sweet-scented flower annually, for they have no real life. We do not complain that they live, but that they do not get buried." This speech is only a little shorter than "Civil Disobedience."

Five years later, on October 30, 1859, Thoreau hastily called his neighbors together in the church vestry in Concord and delivered "A Plea for Captain John Brown." While he spoke, Brown lay nearby in prison, under sentence of death for the attempted slave insurrection at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Thoreau's address was a eulogy to the honor of a brave man who had not waited until he himself was a majority of one or until he was molested in his own person or property. "I do not wish to force my thoughts upon you," Thoreau said, "but I feel forced myself . . . It costs us nothing to be just." Toward the end of the speech, he seemed to address the world at large: "I am here to plead his cause with you. I plead not for his life, but for his character--for his immortal life--and so it becomes your cause, wholly." Thoreau's statements about government have the same flavor as those of eleven years earlier: "The only government that I recognize . . . is that power that established justice in the world."

G. Leaves of Grass:

1. Whitman's Poetry: Whitman as Stylist and Artist.

One of the defining characteristics of Whitman's art is his concrete handling of words, the expression of his belief that words, to have meaning, must refer to and name concrete objects and real experiences. Section 8 of "Song of Myself" contains a good example of this naming:

"The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-
soles, talk of the promenaders,

The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating
thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,

The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of
snow-balls,
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd
mobs--"

We can find literally hundreds of such catalogues in Leaves of Grass. Whitman believed that living speech could come to man only through his absorption into the life surrounding him, that man must learn that the final decisions about language are not made by dictionary makers but "by the masses, people nearest the concrete, having most to do with the actual land and sea" (cf. the 9th grade Dialects unit). Slang he came to think of as a kind of indirection in language, "the power to embody in a vibrant word or phrase the deep silent mysterious never to be examined, never to be told quality of life itself." When he tried to make his meaning plain by giving examples of the way in which many "of the oldest and solidest words we use, were originally generated from the daring and licensed use of slang," he showed that what he was really thinking of was something very like Emerson's first proposition about language--that words are signs of natural facts.[1] He went further and also embraced Emerson's idea that natural facts are symbols of spiritual facts.

His fondness for concrete, common words led him to write great catalogues in his poems as part of an effort to create overtones which would give a kind of divinity or universality to the things which he named. Thus, his catalogues serve to pose the question which he often asked: "If the spiritual is not behind the material, to what purpose is the material?" Some readers, reading the catalogues literally or not reading enough of them to see what they are doing, have become fatigued--have failed to capture their merging action or to feel the aura that hovers over the best of them. Such readers miss the boat. Whitman's catalogues are not mere lists; the words are chosen with great care to evoke certain objects, attitudes, or ideas.

Whitman's lines or sentences also distinguish his art. As you read his poems, you will find some of his sentences extending more than a page. "In Song of Myself," for example, section 15 is composed of one rather typical sentence which extends for almost three pages. In this one sentence, an enumeration of specific examples piles up until we reach the final clause, a general statement which cements all of the examples together, unifying the thought of the entire section. In some of his poems, notably in "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" Whitman uses the compound sentence to "represent the spirit of democracy." These sentences are combinations of many independent clauses, each treating a single subject but all showing the equality of each subject by the placing of each in an independent clause. No subject is subordinated to another because all are of equal worth. Whitman's "ethos" bears a relationship to his philosophy. F. O. Matthiessen claims, in The American Renaissance, that the tone of Whitman's poems is oratorical, that Whitman had thought of becoming a wandering orator to spread his gospel and to make his living, as Emerson did, as a lecturer. Whitman, he claims, always had in mind his audience--and a very large audience he thought it to be. The tone of his poetry is that of a man talking to men. Clearly, Whitman could not use traditional verse forms, with their restrictions on freedom and flexibility, to simulate the quality of a man talking to men. Matthiessen also believes that Whitman's love of opera found its expression in the tone of his poetry. In his verse we find not the spirit of the aria but that of the large, "easily written, loose-finger'd chords" which Whitman admired. In Whitman's art, one finds also a good deal of the Biblical, the Hebrew chants and the Psalms. Although Whitman did not sustain the dignity of language to be found in these Hebrew songs, his line lengths, parallelisms, and repetitions echo the ancient Hebrew prophets and singers (cf. 7th Grade, "Hebrew Religious Narrative" and 10th Grade, "Nature"). Whitman's stylistic mannerisms are individual in other ways which are not so obvious. Critics have said that he was the first American poet to break through the restrictive barriers of the iambic beat; his rhythms are natural echoes of the rhythms in nature. One of his major sources of inspiration in this respect is the sea, the primal rhythmic source which he sought:

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[1] For an examination of this view, cf. Grade VIII, "Words and Their Meanings."

> These, these O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,
> Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me transfer,
> Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,
> And leave its odor there.

Whitman resembles Thoreau who, with no real knowledge of musical technique, found his inspiration in his physical response to natural harmonies. Whitman's verses are the liquid, billowy waves--always rising and falling, at times sunny and smooth, perhaps wild with storm, always dynamic, always moving, always alike in their nature as the rolling waves but scarcely any two exactly alike in size, never having the sense of something finished and fixed but always suggesting something to come. Whitman also found his rhythms in the rhythm of the physical occupations of people--men and women, the carpenter, the seamstress, and so forth. He felt that the restrictions of conventional verse form could not fit the modern themes, the enlargement of people's experiences, the advance of science, the new facts of industry; for these he felt he had to resume that "other medium of expressions, more flexible, more eligible, soaring to the freer, vast, diviner heaven of prose." To give his art a flexibility and largeness of freedom appropriate to the vast geographical area which composes the United States and to the large themes emerging from his consciousness, Whitman invented a style, commonly called free verse, which has been imitated by many poets since his time and which is widely used now.

Whitman's images are sharply visual. His poetry is liberally filled with such images, scene after scene coming out from his lines to catch our attention and to make us aware of the beauty and force of his writing. Look a "This Compost" (p. 294) and see how sharp the images are:

> Behold this compost! behold it well!
> Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person--yet
> behold!
> The grass of spring covers the prairies,
> The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,
> The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
> The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,
> The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out
> of its graves,
> The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,
> The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds
> sit on their nests.

> The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs.
> The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the cow,
> the colt from the mare,
> Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green
> leaves,
> Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilac bloom
> in the dooryards,
> The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those
> strata of sour dead.

Everyone acquainted with rural life sees the spring images clearly, and yet the assembling of this series of common images gives rise to an overtone--the feeling of freshness, color, rebirth, hope, and promise of abundance and goodness. In his own way, Whitman succeeds by using this series of images to give visible and sensible proof of Emerson's repeated statement that natural phenomena are representations of spiritual facts. We see each of these images separately as they are enumerated; we feel them collectively; intuitively, we recognize their spiritual rightness.

We might look at a shorter poem in which Whitman has created what is really a single image--at least a single picture made from the several merging images:

> A line in long array where they wind betwixt green island,
> They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun--
> hark to the musical clank,
> Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses loitering
> stop to drink,
> Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a picture,
> the negligent rest on the saddles,
> Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering
> the ford--while,
> Scarlet and blue and snowy white
> The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

("Cavalry Crossing A Ford," p. 246)

The tableau is almost purely visual--only the "musical clank" and the "splashing horses" with their sounds break the complete silence of the scene. The imagery, the single view, is characteristic of much of Whitman's art.

2. Poems of 1855: "Song of Myself".

"Song of Myself" is a very long poem, a difficult poem to understand. Few critics have been able to find any organic structure in it; it seems to have none of the wholeness to be found in "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," or "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." Certain easily identified themes run through it, but even these are not altogether sustained or integrated, except incidentally.

The first theme concerns the I, the Walt Whitman center of the poem. The poem is called "Song of Myself," after all, because the poet uses it to celebrate himself:

> I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
> And what I assume, you shall assume,
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

These lines suggest the sense of political equality between men which is part of the idealism of early America, but they also suggest the unity of life, the Emersonian microcosm-in-the-macrocosm of the Over-Soul.

The central Whitman, the I, is celebrated again and again:

> Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
> Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking, and breeding,
> No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart
> from them,
> No more modest than immodest. Unscrew the locks from the doors.
> Unscrew the doors themselves from their jams!
> Whoever degrades another degrades me,
> And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

(Section 24, p. 67)

Some readers have been abashed by the supreme egotism of Whitman's declarations, but anyone who knows Emerson's work is aware that these assertions are not expressions of personal egotism. They are rather part of the romantic, optimistic, idealistic spirit of the times. They are also a demonstration of the principle of the unity of men in the Over-Soul. This spirit is especially echoed in two other lines of this section:

> I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of democracy,
> By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their
> counterpart of on the same terms.

Whitman's "I" is a cosmic being--it examines all aspects of life, all men, all parts of nature. It penetrates through the surface or outward manifestations of life, seeking to know life in its fullness as Thoreau sought to know his private world, to get at the heart of essential unity of life. In "Song of Myself" we find such diverse claims of identity as the following:

> "I understand the large hearts of heroes"
> "I am an old artillerist"
> "I am the mashed fireman with breast-bone broken"
> "I know that I have the best of time and space, and was
> never measured and never will be measured."
> "I am the teacher of athletes,"
> "My face rubs the hunter's blanket"
> "I hear and behold God in every object:

Whitman is the "I" finding himself, knowing all these of whom he speaks, because he and they are both men and are therefore the same.

If we are to believe Whitman's catalogues, he knew men and women of all kinds and saw in them the essential unity of man. In "Song of Myself" one finds the boatman, the clam-diggers, the trapper, the runaway slave, the handsome widow, the butcher-boy, the blacksmiths, the negro drayman, the pure contralto, the carpenter, the pilot, the lunatic, the printer, the drunkard, the quadroon girl, the machinist, the half-breed, the marksman, the immigrant, the Wolverine, the squaw, the connoisseur,the deck-hands, the one-year wife, the Yankee girl, the paving-man, the canal boy, the conductor, the drover and peddler, the opium-eater, the prostitute, the President, the fare-collector, and the Missourian. Whitman's ease of language suggests that he circulated easily and freely among all kinds of people, that he took the time to observe people--to find the pure spirit of the Over-Soul shining through them:

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand
   God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than
   myself.

He observes the principle, but he finds it impossible to explain. (These lines should comfort those students who had trouble understanding Emerson's essay on the Over-Soul.)

A brief comparison with Pope may be instructive. While Pope said, "The proper study of mankind is man" and saw man as a knowable element in the universe-machine, Whitman suggested that the proper study of mankind is man and saw a different man, "man" without limit. "Song of Myself," examining "Whitman" as a representative of man, compares all of the "unlimited" in man with the seemingly infinite scope of the external world:

"Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part
   and tag of me is a miracle."
(Page 68)
"I am afoot with my vision."
(Page 74)
"I know I am solid and sound,
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow,
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing means."
(Page 64)

"Song of Myself" seems to lack structure. Several themes are given; the poet plays on one and then another, returns to the first, advances to a third, interweaving them all. Perhaps the poet attempts to include too many parts, to use too many illustrations of his themes, and is unable to discipline them into an organic work. Perhaps he attempts to work on too large a scale; yet, his subject is a large one. His charity and sense of tenderness, of brotherly love, of man and nature as phenomena of what Emerson called the spiritual fact come through on page 53, Section 6 (Signet edition), where the first ten lines employ the grass as a symbol of the unity and universality of life. This symbol accounts for the title of Leaves of Grass. When one looks at the grass, one sees each blade looking like every other blade; so Whitman observes all men--all identical in spirit, dignity, and value. In Section 1, line 5, he initiates the use of this symbol with these lines:

"I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass:"

Then he follows it with this line:

"My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air."

In these two lines, Whitman brings together the controlling thought of his poem. Man is a single species; I, Walt Whitman, am man; all men and I are composed of essentially the same substance (spirit) and have the same potentiality to enlarge ourselves spiritually.

In Section 4, Whitman says, after observing himself and men,

"I have no mocking or arguments, I witness and wait."

The thought is reaffirmed in the final lines of Section 5:

"And I knew the spirit of God is the brother of my own,
And that all men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love,
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder, mullein, and poke-weed."

In this passage, Whitman eventually includes all nature as the One.

In Sections 7 through 16, Whitman adds at least a hundred examples of men and nature in all sorts of circumstances, each good and holy. Section 17 summarizes his first statements thus:

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands,
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing.
If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle they are nothing,
If they are not just as close as they are distant they are nothing,
This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe.

In the next several sections Whitman turns his eyes inward again upon himself, making himself known as a means of making all men known. He shows death as equal in beneficence to life, the body as equal in goodness to the soul. He makes an invocation to the sea, the earth, and the heavens, the content of man. He looks upon the present as the same as the past. (Emerson's idea of "History" is reflected here.) In Section 24, he again celebrates himself, saying,

> "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I
> touch or am touched from."

In Section 25, he speaks of the miracles of man, the same ideas that Emerson proposed in his "Divinity School Address." He gives many examples of the miraculous in man and in natural life. Then he again becomes the observer of common life, tossing at the reader example after example of the actions of man and nature, asserting the dignity and worth of all.

Section 44 begins a new theme, the theme of launching forward into the Unknown:

> "What is known, I strip away,
> I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown."

The poet who expresses himself here is the poet of morning, the poet of vitality, the poet of creation--the poet who engages with life optimistically and believes that what he observes and concludes all men should observe and conclude:

> I open my scuttle at night and see the star-sprinkled systems,
> And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher, edge but
> the rim of the farther systems.
> Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,
> Outward and outward and forever outward.

Section 46 carries on this same forward-looking spirit, inviting all men to share in the mystical experience:

> And I said to my spirit, "When we become the unfolders of
> those orbs, and the pleasure and knowledge of everything
> in them, shall we be filled and satisfied then?"
> And my spirit said, "No, we but level that lift to pass
> and continue beyond."

"Song of Myself" ends by continuing in this optimistic strain, confidently expressing faith that man will ever be the seeker to know himself and his universe better and to be one with it, whether we call it God, Nature, or the Over-Soul.

3. Poems of 1860:[1]

Whitman's "Song of Myself" insists that he is "representative" rather than unique, an individual speaking for all individuals. There is another Whitman: longing, defeated, unsure of himself, and most delicately non-committal in the confession of his private being. Whitman first spoke in this tentative, furtive, and melancholy voice in his poems in the edition of 1860. We can readily appreciate the difference between the two Whitmans by contrasting two poems, one from 1855 and one from 1860: "There was a Child Went Forth" (p. 290) was the tenth of twelve poems in the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass; but, in our edition, it appears among a group of poems, generally quite indistinguished, several of which appeared for the first time in the edition of 1871 under the group title "Autumn Rivulets," with its suggestion of old age and declining powers. "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" (p. 214), the poem we have chosen to illustrate "the other Whitman," first appeared with the "Sea Drift" poems of 1860.

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[1] The ideas of this section and some of the other Whitman sections are largely derived from R. W. B. Lewis, "Reading Walt Whitman," Reports and Speeches of the Seventh Yale Conference on the Teaching of English, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Yale University, 1961.

One can learn a good deal about "There Was a Child Went Forth" merely by examining its structure--the how-it-is-put-together aspect. Each of the stanzas (or paragraphs or parts) is composed of a single syntactical unit, a single sentence (the sentence-stanza is Whitman's characteristic structural unit): as the poem progresses the sentence-stanzas tend to grow increasingly longer, to contain a greater number of lines on the page. The exception, of course, is stanza four, which has only three lines between the eight-line sentence-stanza three and the eighteen-line sentence-stanza five, which concludes the poem. That exception itself turns out to be illuminating--for, looking more closely, but still at only the mechanical syntactical aspect, we see not so much a steady and uninterrupted progress of increasing size and length as a process of alternation in which, however, the impulse toward growth is dominant. This holds true, to some extent, even for individual lines, as well as for the stanzas. Thus, the construction of the first stanza is reflected, or repeated, in each of the first four stanzas: a rhythmic movement from shorter to longer to still longer and back to shorter again. An analysis of sentence and paragraph structures in Whitman according to the principles laid out in the tenth-grade unit on the rhetoric of shorter units of discourse may be quite helpful (Grade 10, The Rhetoric of the Sentence and Paragraph). Observe the movement in the first four lines:

> There was a child went forth every day,
> And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
> And that object became a part of him for the day or a certain
>   part of the day,
> Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

This progression of increases culminating in a decrease of line length produces a rhythmic rise and fall. On the mechanical side, we could call this a process of enlarging and retracting or of stretching and shrinking. We find something of the deceptively simple artistry of Whitman in this curious rhetoric: the line that embodies the shrinking movement is the line accentuated by the word stretching. The poem falls back from the preceding longest line, "And that object became part of him for a day or a certain part of the day," to a short line which nonetheless expresses the greatest spread of time. "Many years or stretching cycles of years" are thus asserted in the moment of shrinking; the stretching impulse is what finally triumphs and defines the form and content and meaning of the poem. Whitman thus creates a kind of tension between syntax and meaning, between form and content, which enriches the reader's experience of the poem.

Mechanical considerations lead one easily enough from the external form of the poem to the experience the poet is trying to define. The poem concerns stretching and shrinking, the rise and fall of psychic energy that for Whitman was so much at the center of his experience, and hence of his poetry. In this poem, as in all those of 1855, the impulse to enlarge, to stretch, to grow is in command. If one looks even superficially at the language he first notices all of the images of things just born or beginning to grow: "lilacs. . . lambs. . . litter. . . foal. . . calf. . . brood. . . plants. . . sprouts. . . blossoms. . . fruits"; he notes the progress of the year from "third-month" to "fourth-month" to "fifth-month." The newly born and growing things in nature are paralleled by the main human figure, the child freshly arrived in the world and setting forth on his own career of beginning and developing and blossoming; they are the means of the child's forward motion into his world.

The most evocative word of the poem is the word Forth in the title and the first line. The key word is the oft-repeated word becomes. The child becomes what he looks upon, and it becomes a part of him; thus, the poem is about growth as a process of becoming. After meeting the elements of nature, the child goes on to meet and become human elements--his schoolmistress, his school mates, his parents, the men and women he sees flashing by in the streets: "If they are not flashes and specks what are they?" Finally he meets and becomes the world at large--the streets, the entire village, the waves of the sea, the clouds in the sky, the horizon's edge: "These became a part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day."

"It is. . . not the child alone that comes into being; "The outside worl undergoes the same process through the medium of the third element that becomes, namely, the poem itself."[1] The poem assembles elements of the outside world by various devices: by associating the similar; by letting the specific represent the universal; by enclosing a variety within a single grammatical unit (as in sentence-stanza three); by the inclusive effect of the phrase "become part of him"; and by a subtly modulated rhythm. This is the morning mood of the early Whitman. By 1860, a change has set in, with results that we can readily observe by examining "As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life" (p. 214).

"As I Ebb'd" is almost twice as long as the "Child Went Forth" and more complex and difficult. Clearly enough, this poem deals with the Whitman of ebb, the decline of the day and year. The poet is found "musing late in the autumn day." The images of sprouting and blossoming and coming to fruition that we saw in the last poem give way, and in their place we find, in the last half of Part 1,

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[1] Lewis, p. 60.

> Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds and the sea-gluten,
> Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce,
> left by the tide. (p. 215)

To these are added, in the sixth line of Part 2, "A few sands and dead leaves"; in the middle of Part 3, "a trail of drift and debris"; in lines eight and nine of Part 4, "loose windows, little corpses," "Froth, snowy White, and bubbles,"; and finally, "from dead lips the ooze exuding at last"--all images of the sterile debris of life. Metrically, this poem presents a noticeable advance in the variety and complexity of rising and falling rhythms, for it is the falling rhythm that predominates. In line 5 we read, "Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways"; in the last line of Part 3, "Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the murmuring I envy." In each case, the falling rhythm and tonality embody the slide toward death which is the central theme of the poem.

Whitman employs, in this poem, a seemingly simple yet crucial grammatical device; to miss it is to miss the center of the poem. This device is the shift from the past tense in Part 1 ("As I Ebb'd. . . as I Wended. . . As I walked") to the present tense in Part 2 ("As I wend . . . As I list . . . As I inhale"). This grammatical shift corresponds to the shift from the known to the unknown, from "The shores I know" to "the shores I know not": a shift from time to the timeless. The shift occurs close to the center of the poem. What stimulates in the poet the feeling of decay and death is exactly the whole timeless realm of truth and reality, which,as he now realizes, his poetry has never known, never even touched upon. He is "baffled, balk'd, bent. . . (and) oppressed" because he now perceives (near the end of Part 2) that he has "not understood anything, not a single object, and that no man ever can." He had just identified the essential reality that he had failed to grasp a few lines earlier as "the real Me," a real me which must be contrasted with the legendary me of "Song of Myself," where Whitman proclaims the perfect union of both, and of all possible identities. We hear the bitterness with which he speaks of his earlier writing:

> Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon
> me I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
> But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands
> yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
> Withdrawn far,mocking me with mock congratulatory signs
> and bows,
> With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I
> have written,
> Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand
> beneath.

What is dying in the poem is Whitman's false, arrogant identity as the lusty singer of the 1855 poems. He now realizes, he says, that his public image (the voice of his earlier poems) is not in contact with the timeless world of eternal reality. The literary me, the public image, cut off from the real me, is disintegrating into a mass of "Drift and debris, with ooze exuding from dead lips." This is Whitman at his most sensitive, his most unsure, his most questioning. However,the poem is saved from any suggestion of self-pity by the strong note of the poet laughing at himself, the image of the real me ridiculing the decaying literary me with "mock-congratulatory signs and bows," "with peals of distant ironical laughter."

Whitman treats his life, particularly his creative life as a poet, as life on the ebb, inescapably flowing away from his grasp. He says at the beginning that "As I ebb'd with the ocean of life, As I wended. . . musing late in the autumn day (line 8). . . (I) was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot." The lines are the meeting of sea and land--a place of merging which, in Whitman's mind, seems to symbolize the demarcation between becoming and being, the marriage of the jointly-creative forces of sea and land. At the top of the next page (p. 216), he addresses the land as his father and the sea as his mother (cf. the beginning of Part 4), an identification emphasizing the pervasive sense of the alienation of the real Me from the literary Me, the poet from his genius. This feeling is intensified by the felt alienation of the poet, as child, from his symbolic parents. He prays to each of these parents in turn, in Parts 3 and 4, to restore in him the power to create, to renew his poetry-making energy, "the secret of the murmuring I envy."

The poem is that rare thing in literature, a poem of quality whose subject is the feeling of poetic extinction. The poem succeeds because the threat of exhaustion is overcome precisely by converting the feeling of being so threatened into a poetic experience. At the lowest ebb, Whitman can say, in Part 4, that the gift will return, that ebb will be succeeded by flow, that inspiration will overcome his alienation and exhaustion. The affirmation is convincing because the fear is genuine.

An entire group of Whitman's poems of 1860 shows him preoccupied, sometimes almost to the point of obsession, with thought of declining powers, decay, dissolution, and death. Most of them appear in the section entitled "Calamus." The calamus is a small palm; perhaps all three of its distinctive characteristics--its long, sword-shaped leaves, its heavily sweet flower, and its aromatic root--had symbolic significance for Whitman. Most of the "Calamus" poems will not require a great deal of your attention. For that reason, the notes which follow will be quite brief.

"A Glimpse" (p. 124) offers the reader a glimpse of the poet in a cheap bar room, not back-slapping and joking with the workmen and drivers, but withdrawn in a quiet corner, enjoying the company--the mere nearness and comradeship of a young friend in silence.

"City of Orgies" (p. 131) carries a blatantly extravagant title which attracts undue attention to the poem. In the "City of Orgies," Whitman has come to realize that his former delight in the purely external and diversionary aspects of existence is not sufficient for a full life. Only the inner life of the heart, of the spirit, satisfies, and this inner life can be nourished adequately only by the love and comradeship of his fellow men, freely offered and accepted and shared, without petty restraint. Sexual imagery, such as we find in this poem, is very common in Whitman; some of it is very bold--so much so, in fact, that the mind balks at regarding it as having a basis in autobiography. Its source could only be a highly-charged, romantic imagination. (Perhaps it is well that we remind ourselves that symbolic, "spiritual" autobiography and ordinary autobiography are rather different.) Though students may at times blush at Whitman for his unabashed forwardness of language, they should find nothing in him to which the appropriate response is a furtive snicker. Sexual imagery in Whitman rarely, if ever, means sex. It usually means one of two things: friendship, a relationship about which he felt and expressed himself much more warmly than most people do, or the creative force of life, very frequently the poet's own psychic energy. Remembering that sex is a symbol will clarify many common misapprehensions about Whitman and his poetry. When, for instance, he writes, "City of Orgies . . . your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love. Offering me response to my own--these repay me. Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me," the poet is dramatizing what it is like to be sick at heart, longing for the indispensable solace of the kind of love that exists between true comrades, but he is not himself sick in the head.

"Whoever You Are, Holding Me Now in Hand" (p. 114) presents a similar sexual imagery which stands both for friendship and for the creativity of the poet. In the poem, we find the speaker very stand-offish and aloof, bafflingly reluctant to reveal himself. He is determined to withdraw; he will not give reasons, but he leaves the door just slightly ajar. He is unsure of himself; he seems to be concerned about the relationship between himself and some other person. Actually, as we soon discover, it is the relationship between himself and his public, his readers, that he is concerned about. He is not sure that the self he has created and paraded, the poetic creed he has so confidently proclaimed, is either adequate or true. He does not understand himself, so, lover-like, he goes on the defensive and crawls into his shell, trying to reconcile himself to his own amazement by suggesting that the public is unable to understand him. It is a sad and not very rewarding poem.

"Scented Herbage of My Breast" (p. 112) expresses symbolically Whitman's deepest fears that his creative powers are dying away. The scented herbage, like the leaves, symbolizes his poems. Here they are "tomb leaves, body leaves growing up above me, above death," as though they were his epitaph. Though the sense of death pervades the poem, the poet works his way toward an affirmative attitude toward life. For the roots of his leaves are perennial; winter will not freeze them, and they will emerge again. Even now, probing deeply into his consciousness, he can write,

> You faint-tinged roots, you make me think of death,
> Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally
>   beautiful except death and love?)
> O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant
>   of lovers,
> I think it must be for death.

We can be sure that it was difficult for him to accept death, and even more difficult to love it. Whitman no longer expressed love in terms of connection but in terms of separation, even the separation of death; he came to believe that through death he could see into the heart of creation and the meaning of life. (We should perhaps remind ourselves that most great poets have treated love [and life itself] in terms of death.) If the vision came hard, that was the sign of its reality. In the "Sweet Herbage" poem, he says (p. 113) that he is ready to make a new beginning:

> Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you
>   serve me not,
> I will say what I have to say by itself.

*   *   *   *

> Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord
>   with it,
> Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now
>   above all, and are folded inseparably together, you
>   love and death are,
> Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I
>   was calling life.

"A Hand Mirror" (p. 225) is an 1860 poem shifted from its chronological place in a later edition. "Hold it up sternly," he says; take a good look at yourself. What he sees is all that is unwholesome and putrid about an ever-decaying body. Although this is a poem of disillusionment and reconciliation to physical decay, the poem avoids becoming mawkish or effusive. Though the images of physical decay and dissolution are strong, there is no suggestion of self-pity or furtiveness or nastiness in them. That is, this is not a "sick" poem. Whitman's awareness of a former state of vibrant physical well being, given in lines three and four, is the dramatic setting for the present awareness of decay; it is this balancing of the unwholesome against the wholesome which gives the statement its force. In line four the "Slave's eye, voice, hands, stop" tell us that the commanding individualist is now neither in control of his life and its processes nor proudly aware of his identity; instead, his life, his identity, is now an anonymous slave to the decaying body. Nor is it only the physical functions that have lost their prime, for there has been an accompanying falling off in the responsiveness and acuteness of the senses and of the mind, expressed in "Words babble, hearing and touch, callous. No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex. . . Such a result so soon--and from such a beginning."

"So Long" (p. 382) is another 1860 poem placed much later in the book, among the "Songs of Parting," as though it were an old-age farewell. Whitman says, "To conclude, I announce what comes after me." He has written his country's songs; now, when the country lives up to its promise, to his aspirations for it, its great future will be realized (*consummated*, line 3). Then, in line 13, he writes, "While my pleasure is yet at the full, I *whisper*, So Long," and we notice the tentativeness of the whisper. At the middle of the next page, he is almost overcome to recognize how deficient his understanding of life has been. He feels unequal to the task of comprehending and communicating all he is now aware of:

I forsee too much, it means more than I thought,
It appears to me I am dying.
Hasten throat and sound your last.

Then he dedicates his work to all and sundry, to the world at large, and declares the individual and personal nature of his work:

this is no book,
Who touches this, touches a man.

The best of the "Calamus" poems is "I Saw in Louisians a Live-Oak Growing" (p. 121). Again the subject seems to be companionship, the need for it in the man and in the poet. The tree flourishes all by itself, standing without any companion and "uttering" leaves of rich green. Not so the poet: "I know very well I could not," he says. The word *uttering* immediately informs us that the tree's productive life is an analogy for Whitman's productivity as a poet. The poem is stated with admirable economy and restraint. Although it is not divided into sentence-stanzas, it consists of six such grammatical units in three movements. The three movements present first the situation (the analogue), then his action in response to the observed situation, and finally his comment on its meaning. Notice how the theme unfolds: five times in these lines the poet emphasize in an order of climax the "aloneness" of the tree, a condition that strikes him forcefully because he is painfully aware of his own aloneness:

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
(1) All alone stood it, and the moss hung down from the branches,
(2) Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous leaves of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself;
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone
(3) there without its friends, its lover near--for I knew I could not;
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it, and twined around it a little moss,
And brought it away--and I have placed it in sight of my room;
It is not needed to remind me of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them:)
Yet it remains to me a curious token--it makes me think of manly love;

For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in
(4) Louisiana, solitary, in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life, without a friend,
(5) a lover near, I know very well I could not.

Whitman's realization that "in the midst of life we are in death" and his reconciliation to the reality of death is masterfully treated in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (p. 209). The poem is organized into sections of varying lengths within which one finds a recurrent pattern of recitative and aria, a pattern of organization (in fact, a dramatic device) Whitman has borrowed from the opera. The recitative sections are composed of the poet's narration of the story and of his exposition of his own external experience. The aria sections (printed in italics) ostensibly represent the song of the mocking bird. Actually, they represent the poet's subjective experience, his response to the song of the bird, especially his interpretation of what its songs meant to him.

The situation of the poem may be summarized as follows: a boy, wandering alone along the Long Island sand beach, both by day and by night, observes the mating, nesting, and nest-tending of a pair of recently-arrived mockingbirds. He is deeply moved by their mutual devotion to their task and to each other, and by the ecstatic song of the male bird as he watches over the nesting female. Then, suddenly, the female disappears and never returns. From then on, the song of the male seems to the boy to express such longing for his mate, such a deep sense of loss, that the boy can not help feeling that he shares the loss. (Whitman makes the boy identify with the bird early in the poem when the boy addresses the bird as "sad brother.") Throughout the following days and nights, the boy observes the bird and listens to the evocative song from that trembling throat. His pursuit of the bird, we come to understand, is really pursuit of an explanation for the tragedy and for its meaning. Finally it comes to him--from out of the sad song, from the soft darkness, from the incessant whispering of the waves on the sand beach--that the simple answer to the tragedy of loss and frustration, to the apparently meaningless annihilation of the close union, is the fact of death.

In this way Whitman again dramatizes the growing up of a boy, the probing and troubled spirit's search for the meaning of life's problems. Here, as in the first poem discussed, a child goes forth and becomes a part of what he experiences. This poem, like the other, may be described as literature of "becoming."

The opening sentence-stanza of 22 lines, the longest of the poem, recounts a broad spectrum of the boy's experience as a meaningful context for the experience he is going to relate. The experience is announced in the closing lines of section 1: "I, chanter of pains and joys. . . a reminiscence sing." Notice the inclusiveness of the impressions--from vague emotional stirrings to the concrete sense of walking over tilled fields:

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,

Out of the ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories, sad brother, from the fitful risings and fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-aroused words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

These lines foreshadow the argument of the poem: The poet, in the guise of a boy, identifies with the bird, calling him "sad brother," and gains from the experience an awakening sense of his own vocation as a poet. A final hint suggests that the ultimate release from the tension and frustration of individual existence (partially resolved through art) is death.

In these lines the images from childhood are woven into a symbolic fabric. The weaving process, in which the bird is a "musical shuttle," is suggested by various syntactical and sound devices. The repeated prepositions ("out of . . . Over. . . Down from. . . Up from . . . Out from. . . From. . . From. . . From," etc.) suggest the various sources and directions from which the memories come and also the converging patterns of the weaving-together of disparate experience which the poem (and the experience of death) achieves. The poet identifies himself as "uniter of here and hereafter," in accordance with Emerson's definition of a poet as an "integrating seer."

The sound patterns of the lines are particularly rich in devices which relate verbal elements to one another: assonance, alliteration, an effect of internal rhyme (in rocking-mocking, beyond-wander'd, and bareheaded-barefoot), and a marriage of sound and sense in the imagery of line 6 ("the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if they were alive"). These devices are supported by the rhythm: the irregularly stressed but strongly rhythmic lines, the rhythm of which their previous study of prosody should help your students to analyze. Notice the operatic and dramatic terms in section 8 (following the extended aria); Whitman calls the bird song an aria and the voices of the three protagonists--boy, bird, and sea--"The trio, each uttering" his part in the dramatic colloquy. In section 9, the boy has identified with the bird and received the gift(or the curse?) of song; he has promised that "Never more shall I cease perpetuating you," which means, "Never more (shall) the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me." He must, therefore, sing as the bird sang--out of his own grief. But this is the poet of the "Calamus" poems, who has suggested that his own "destiny" might be emotional and spiritual "chaos." Hence, for "the sweet hell within, The Unknown want, the destiny of me," he asks for a clue, for some intimation of his own fate. Because he is more than a creature of nature, there comes to him a higher understanding of death--and it is to him, not to the bird, that the sea whispers the answer.

In abstract summary, the poet says that there is something beyond and more important than personal grief and longing, however great that may be. Out of the chaos of physical and emotional pain emerges the poet's intuitive realization of the ultimate meaning of death as absorption of the individual into the soul of nature or the universe. This spiritual truth not only reconciles him to the cruel facts of life but also enables him to accept them joyously, and thus to transcend the pathos of his own private emotions. Thus, the poet of the 1860 poems becomes once more the Emersonian mystic, the seer who can read the symbolism of nature, and, at least in part, the self-reliant discoverer of his own quiet divinity.

Perhaps we should remark in passing that the cradle of the title, of the first line, and of the next-to-the-last line is, first of all, the baby cradle; metaphorically, it is also the cradle of life, which is the sea, the source of all life, with its incessant ebbing and flowing, rising and falling, cradle-like motion.

"Out of the Cradle" is one of the most successfully-integrated and complex poems in our literature, a poem whose organization should allow you to handle the blanket indictment of formlessness which students sometimes level against Whitman's poetry because of his tendency to identify and merge with his subject and to be indiscriminate in selection of detail. It exhibits detachment, an objectification of subject, through the use of the three related central figures.

Organization of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"

Sentence	Lines	Content	No. of Lines	Section
1	1-22	I sing a reminiscence of childhood	22	1
2	23-31	Situation: two birds, nesting	9	2
3	32-40	Bird's song of love - ecstatic	9 SONG	3
4	41-45	The missing she bird	11	4
5	46-51	The grieving he bird		

6	52-54	He-bird's song: Wind blow (Apostrophe)* my mate to me	3 SONG	5
7	55-58	Poet's comment on sadness of song		
8	59-60	Meanings I understand		
9	61-68	Yes, my brother, I listen; I know	16	6
10	69-70	I listen, following you, my brother		
11	71-74	Bird's song: Voice and motion of the sea; soothing and soothed, but not to me	8	
12	75-76	Sees lagging moon, heavy with love		
13	77-78	Union of sea and land		
14	79-80	Apostrophe to night, the breakers		
15	81-85	" to love; I come, you must know		
16	86-89	" to moon: what shape? Do not keep her		
17	90-92	" to land!		
18	93-94	" to rising stars		
19	95-98	" to his own tuneful throat	APOS 40	7
20	99-104	" to the carols!		
21	105-110	" to himself, to listen		
22	111-114	" to his mate, to come		
23	115-118	" to his mate, not to be misled		
24	119-120	Exclamation: O Darkness, O in vain!		
25	121-122	" O halo; O troubled reflection		
26	123-124	" Singing! Longing, all useless	11	
27	125-129	" Utter desolation, loss of love		
28	130-143	The boy, beginning to understand	14	8
29	144-149	Boy's Apostrophe to bird(demon /within?/)		
30	150-157	Promise, never to forget, to be the free, innocent child again	21	9
31	158-159	Plea for ultimate answer, understanding		
32	160-164	A word, then: O sea, have you been whispering it?		
33	165-173	Message from sea, interpreted - death		
34	174-183	Will remember, fuse into songs	19	10

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* There is much variety in the poet's forms of address (i. e., in the shifting point of view of the narrator-protagonist). The chart above indicates only his use of apostrophe and exclamation. The influence of opera suggests calling the poet's word recitative, the bird's song aria.

4. Poems of 1867:

Whitman did not make his Civil War poems at the time that he observed the suffering of the Civil War; his experiences required time to crystallize before they could become poems. In 1867, however, he did publish a new edition of Leaves of Grass in which a new section was included: "Drum-Taps." Two very fine though short poems from the war years are "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" and "Bivouac on a Mountain Side." "Bivouac on a Mountain Side" (p. 246) is extremely short:

> I see before me now a traveling army halting
> Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and
>   orchards of summer,
> Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt,
>   in places rising high,
> Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with
>   tall shapes dingily seen,
> The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some
>   away up on the mountain,
> The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-
>   sized, flickering,
> And over all the sky--the sky! far, far out of reach,
>   studded, breaking out, the eternal stars.

In one respect this is a panoramic poem. The poet seems to see from a distance, from a position which allows him to see the whole landscape, as if he were on a higher promontory than any of the troops. He picks out the details of the scene: first the peaceful valley, then the rising terraced sides of the mountain, the rocks and cedars, the campfires scattered near and far, the shadowy forms of men and horses, and finally the image which causes the whole poem suddenly to "explode into unity"--"and over all the sky--the sky! far, far out of reach, studded, breaking out, the eternal stars." Notice how the repetition of such words as sky and far amplify the scene and how the word eternal, which suggests the contrast between man (even as magnified by the fire) with his trivial affairs and, on the other hand, the great, silent, unlimited universe. This contrast suddenly creates the full significance of the poem, brings all the details together as part of the all-encompassing scope of the "Over-Soul."

Again, look at "The Wound-Dresser" (p. 252). Whitman always said that his resolution to become a volunteer nurse during the Civil War was the beginning of his deepened perception of the meaning of suffering. Later, in reviewing his grounds for deciding to become a nurse, he said that he could never think of himself as firing a gun on another man. He felt his greatest call (and he indicated its source by adding, in parenthesis, Quaker) was to go around and do what he could for the wounded and dying. The poem is, like so much that this unit studies, spiritual autobiography, told retrospectively. The time of the war is past, and the young people ask the old man--Whitman, we may believe--to tell them of the memories that stay with him deepest--the *hard-fought engagements* or the *sieges tremendous*. In recollecting, the poet does not dwell on the *soldier's perils* or the *soldiers' joys*, but on the wounded, lying where their *precious blood reddens* the grass, on the rows of hospital tents, on the long rows of cots in the army hospitals, on the refuse pail and its clotted rags and blood, the crush'd head, the breathless rattles of the cavalry-man shot through the chest, the bloody stump of an arm, the deep wound in the side, the perforated shoulder, the putrid gangrene of a foot with a bullet wound. All these details, become, in turn, subordinate to the men who suffer and to whom the poet, as nurse, becomes a kind of Christ. And yet, paradoxically, the use of such phrases as *hinged knees*, *I could not refuse to die for you*, *I am faithful*, *in my breast a fire*, *burning flame* builds a prayerful attitude toward the sufferers (cf. "To Him that Was Crucified") so that the saviour of the men becomes their worshipper. In another poem ("A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim") Whitman describes how, coming out of his tent, he saw three forms on stretchers under blankets. Turning back the blankets from their faces, he found in that of the third man

> a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of beautiful
> yellow-white ivory:
> Young man I think I know you--I think this is the face
> of the Christ himself,
> Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

Much of this same thought is apparent in "The Wound-Dresser."

Although the original title of "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed" was "President Lincoln's Burial Hymn," the poet does not mention the great President's name once in this poem. The poem is a threnody, a funeral song or dirge in which Whitman very skillfully weaves together three major symbols and several minor ones. The major ones are the star, the thrush, and the lilac.

The Star: In section 1, the "great star" already has a double meaning. Line 2 conveys an image of the evening star which rises out of the sunset and sets or "droops" early in the western sky. Simultaneously, we can assume a second meaning for the great star, that of "him I love," some great man who has died, whom the speaker reveres and now mourns. This second metaphorical meaning is developed, in section 2, so that "great star disappear'd" (line 9) into "black murk" suggests clearly a human figure fallen in death. The speaker cries out, "O cruel hands that hold me powerless," as though he were horrified and yet unable to alter his friend's fate. Clearly these words are not appropriate for the literal physical setting or the mere falling of a star in the sky.

In section 8 (p. 267), the star has been separated from its identification with the dead man. Now it is seen as an agent of portents (as in astrology), but the speaker also assigns human traits to it. It is not clear whether the star is seen as surviving the death of the speaker's friend. Probably it is. Here the "soul" of the speaker is parallel to that of the star and partially identified with it: "As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,/ Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone." The speaker's soul sank under its burden of trouble just as the star "dropt" from its normal orbit. We do not have a clear arrangement of metaphorical parallels here because the star is "humanized" even before it is brought into comparison with the speaker's soul--humanized by being described as having "something to tell" and being "full. . . of woe."

In section 9, the star appears as a force acting on the speaker in conflict with the call of the bird singing in the swamp. We can imagine the speaker caught between the physical charm of the bird's song and the physical attraction of the bright star shining (though on the verge of fading) in the west. On a symbolic level of meaning, the phrase "the star my departing comrade" is very rich. In section 1 the star had been the departed comrade; in section 8 it had been a companion in misery to the speaker's soul. Here, both metaphorical meanings are present, as well as the star as physical image. Risking a paraphrase, some such meaning as this emerges from lines 69 and 70 (last two lines of section 9): "But a moment I linger to continue gazing at this bright western star. Although I am being called away, the star holds me as though it were a dear friend of mine. Even as this star departs--fading into the night sky--it holds me motionless, such is its power over me; such also was the power over me of that great man who is now dead, who departed from me, falling into the blackness of death."[1] It should be evident by now that the star undergoes very elaborate development, although the method of metaphorical elaboration is richly suggestive rather than strictly logical.

The Thrush: In section 4, the thrush is presented in its physical aspect as the shy bird with the beautiful song. One can easily associate the bird with the speaker of the poem; like the thrush, the lamenting poet "sings by himself" in pain and sorrow ("bleeding throat"). Line 25 (p. 265) is certainly meant to reflect from the bird to the speaker-poet who, if he could not sing of his pain at the death of "him I love," would die of grief. In section 1 Whitman mentioned a trinity of lilac, star, and thought of "him I love." In the final section (line 198, section 16) he refers to "retrievements out of the night" and specifies three things presumably salvaged from the night of grief, loss, and death: lilac, star, and thrush. It would seem likely, if we connect the early trinity with the final retrievements, that the thrush is introduced into the poem to objectify the thought of "him I love." This would be appropriate, for the thought of a poet might very well be a singing thought, and the sad-sounding yet lovely song of the hermit thrush would express perfectly effectively the effort of the speaker-poet to exhibit his grief in attractive language.

In section 10 (p. 267), the speaker and the thrush are closely identified.

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[1] F. O. Matthiesse, The American Renaissance.

With section 9 as a background, we can say that the poet has lost the physical presence of the dead man ("star") and moved into the isolation ("secluded recesses") of grief where, thrush-like, he may sing of "the large sweet soul that has gone" (line 72), thereby "perfuming" "the grave of him I love" with praise. At the same time, there are portions of the poem (cf. section 13) in which the thrush is not a symbol for the poet but simply very closely parallel with him, so that the speaker-poet calls the thrush "dearest brother" and "wondrous singer," evoking a relationship of kinship rather than identity. In the latter part of section 14 (p. 269, fourth stanza from the bottom of the page), the bird's song seems to express a hidden knowledge of death, not the speaker's knowledge, but a knowledge which he simply remarks or "tallies." Can we pretend that the thrush sings the italicized lines 135 to 162? Not without creating an absurdity. We would guess that the dramatic fiction here is that the speaker-poet "reads into" the wordless song of the thrush these lines in praise of death. To sum up, the bird image emerges as the vehicle for the poet's thoughts of the departed friend. Essentially, the thrush symbolizes the elegizing effort itself, the poetic effort to embody unhappiness in a language worthy of the man who has died.

The Lilac: In section 1, lilacs are associated with the rebirth of of spring. It may be significant that their leaves are seen as "heart-shaped," for in the poem as a whole they would seem to stand for the physical processes of life itself. In section 6 (p. 266), the speaker innocently and forthrightly offers his sprig of lilac to the "coffin that slowly passes." So, in section 7, he comes with flowers to deck the grave, and the first flower is the lilac. This is the physical flower, not a symbolic flower; however, as does any funeral bonquet, the flower represents the tribute paid by life to death, a kind of sacrificial gift.

In section 13 (p. 268), the speaker must get beyond the "mastering odor" of the lilac--the hold on life--in order to reach the climactic point of the poem, that moment when he turns from his sorrow at individual death to the contemplation of death itself, imaged as a maternal presence.

In line 205 ("Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul"), the lilac, star, and bird are dramatic symbols which have enabled the poet to retrieve from the chaos of grief a pattern of meaning which is, on one hand, the poem and, on the other hand, that which makes personal loss bearable. The speaker has seen the image of the friend's fate in the departing of the star, has offered his own life and his own hold on life to the dead man in the form of the lilac, and has found, by means of the thrush, a mode of expression which enables him to achieve a shaped meaning in "the chant of my soul." The three symbols combined have enabledthe speaker to reach a point of insight and detachment. He can now drop them: "Passing, I leave the lilac," etc. Yet, they are "each to keep and all," because they express the total significance of the "mourning into morning" experience.

Whitman has interwoven some of the facts of Lincoln's death with the symbolic elements. Section 6, for example, describes the progress of

Lincoln's funeral train from Washington to Springfield--the grieving people who wait along the tracks or at the stations to pay their tribute and the church services which are held all over the northern half of the country. This section of the poem, while beautifully suggestive, is based on historical fact.

5. Poems of 1871:

The students' examination of Whitman should include some of the 1871 poems. "Sparkles from a Wheel" (p. 308) may require very careful exegesis. The scene and action were undoubtedly a commonplace at the time, the itinerant knife-sharpener carrying on his trade on the sidewalk and the crowd of idle children watching him at his trade. But the transcendental symbolic technique, by now a very subtle instrument in Whitman's hands, makes the poem more than a descriptive set-piece. The old man goes about his work unemotionally, children watch silently, but Whitman, the observer, effusive and floating, is absorbed and arrested by the scene which he beholds. No direct statement here; in fact, no statement at all in the ordinary sense, just the scene and the action and the poet's response to it. What arrests the poet? Are the sparks from the wheel a kind of miracle which Whitman was so often seeing among the people at their commonplace occupations? Are the dead stone and the dull knife brought together for the projection of miraculous ends? The sparkles themselves seem immaterial and momentary. There is nothing enduring about them. Is Whitman suggesting that the children are made quiet by witnessing the creation of the miraculous sparkles? Is he suggesting that within the ordinary parts and properties of life there is a divine fire which, with the proper stimulation, may be made to burn. Are these observing children divine sparks from the wheel of life--the life cycle? Is the old man, the knife-grinder, God, bringing life out of deadness? Or is this a cosmic experience of the poet who so often described himself as being kosmic? Is he strongly moved by this scene because his immediate, intuitive perception suddenly knows the spirituality which hovers over the scene and is transmitted between the old knife-grinder and the children by way of the sparkles as medium? One interpretation is not necessarily better than another in defining what Whitman does in "Sparkles from the Wheel."

The use of metaphor is more obvious in "A Noiseless Patient Spider" (pp. 346-348):

> A noiseless patient spider,
> I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
> Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
> It launched forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
> Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.
>
> And you O my soul where you stand,
> Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
> Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres
>   to connect them,
> Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold;
> Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

The spider in its attempt to build a web tosses out, from its position on a little promontory, filament after filament, trying to find something near enough tc which it can anchor the ends of each of its filaments. By establishing these main lines of support, it builds upon them a complete web at the center of which it can live its life. Whitman makes of this actual scene from nature the vehicle in a metaphor for man's condition. Man, too, seeks always to find points of anchorage to which he can attach his faith, to build for himself a meaningful pattern within which he can live his life fully and richly. By using the concrete image to mirror the abstract, by employing the particular to reflect the general, Whitman succeeds in giving the reader an explicit picture of man's own predicament. The spider trying to find something to which to attach his filaments suggests man's capacity for establishing a meaningful relationship with the rest of the universe.

Whitman rounded out his poetic career (and attained the position for which he prayed in his 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass) with "Passage to India." In 1855, Whitman wanted to cut himself off from the past. Under Emerson's influence, he wanted to forget the past; yet by 1871 he saw that one could not separate himself from the past. "Passage to India" celebrates the distant past--of America, of England, and of western civilization--and evisages the future. The first section tells us that the present is simply a growth out of the past. Section 2 celebrates the past--seeing it all as a preparation for the present, God's purpose evidencing itself in lands spanned and oceans crossed so that the races and nations can be married and the lands welded together. The poet closes this section by singing a new worship--not just that of those who have helped man to span the world, "But in God's name, and for they sake O Soul."

Section 3 delineates in detail how the Suez Canal has helped to connect the passage to India and how the railroad has carried the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans across America. The end of this section honors Columbus for his vision in 1492, a vision now become reality. Section 4 honors and celebrates the visions and travels of Columbus, Vasco de Gama, and other sea explorers of early times.

Section 5 begins to build a larger theme. All this encircling of the earth, this creating of a passage to India by sailing west, suggests that God's purpose for man is to help him span the distance between God and man. The connecting of land masses of the earth through man's ingenuity suggests the possibility that the same ingenuity can span the distance between man and God. The son of God, the poet, will enable men to span this void between man and deity. Section five's imagery refers to concrete elements (the earth and the works of inventors, scientists, chemists, geologists, and ethnologists) as parallels to the spiritual elements which the poet will discover and arrange to make possible a new passage. Section 6 celebrates the current year as the turning point in man's development. The explorations and discoveries of the earth have been a preliminary step to the present; the present age will carry man's explorations and discoveries further. Section 7 stands as an answer to section 6; here the poet celebrates "the voyage of the mind's return. To reason's early paradise, Back back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions, Again with fair creation." We are back with the "Oversoul" essay and "Self-Reliance." Impatient as the early explorers and discoverers, the soul and the poet likewise "take ship" : "Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas, Fearless for unknown shores." The launching out brings the poet back full circle to the idealism and optimism of "Song of Myself," the big poem of 1855, idealism and optimism tempered now both by a period of doubt and by a period of experiencing man's extreme suffering during the Civil War. Whitman completes his "passage to India" by addressing the soul in Western Transcendental and Eastern mystical terms:

> O thou transcendent,
> Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
> Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou center of
> them. . .

The soul is the center of man and the center of the universe. A few lines later (p. 327), the poet writes,

> Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
> At nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
> But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
> Thou matest time, smilest content at Death,
> And fillest, swellest full the vastness of Space.

This progress from one stage of spiritual development to another is concluded at the end of section 8:

> Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
> The seas all crossed, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,
> Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
> As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother found
> The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

Thus, with a reversal of the parable of the Prodigal Son, the poem comes to rest, the whole history of physical exploration and discovery and all the inspirations of man serving to suggest that man will know the earth and ultimately the universe, his place in the universe, and his relation to the creator.

Section 9 thus repeats the same thought as section 8, and the poem concludes with a vision that each man, knowing his own soul as a fragment of God, will possess all real knowledge worth having and so be brother and equal to God:

> O brave soul!
> O farther farther sail!
> O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
> O farther, farther, farther sail!

There is, in Whitman's mysticism, no anti-intellectualism and no contempt for science; the discovery of "what is" is for Whitman a discovery of what God is. This final passage, with its affirmation of a perpetual meaningful quest for the divine, a quest which forever discovers more of the divine in the natural world, harks back to Emerson's "The Over-soul" and "Spring" and epitomizes the finest of the mystical, transcendental spirit. "Passage to India" is a more controlled, mature, history-conscious version of "Song of Myself."

H. The Poems of Emily Dickinson:

1. Dickinson and Transcendentalism: Religious Thought

Emily Dickinson is placed at this point in the course because she falls under both the Transcendentalist and the Calvinist schools; that is, she exhibits in her poetry the thought of both. She serves as a bridge between the two kinds of thought. Some critics treat her as a Calvinist, but at times she wrote in a most un-Calvinistic vein:[1]

Some keep the Sabbath going to church;
I keep it staying at home,
With a bobolink for a chorister,
And an orchard for a dome.

Some keep the Sabbath in surplice;
I just wear my wings,
And instead of tolling the bell for church,
Our little sexton sings.

God preaches,--a noted clergyman,--
And the sermon is never long;
So instead of getting to heaven at last,
I'm going all along!

This poem has the anti-ecclesiastical tone of Emerson, for it recalls the remark in the *Divinity School Address* that "on Sundays, it seems wicked to go to church." But, where this poem worships nature as Emerson might, in other poems, Dickinson does seem to reflect some Calvinistic influences. For example, the suffering of Christ is central in the Christian faith; it is central in Calvinistic belief, and the cross is Calvinistic Christianity's central symbol. The Christian Calvinistic concern with suffering, sin, evil, and inherited woe appears in Dickinson's poems sometimes as metaphor, sometimes as subject:

I like a look of agony,
Because I know it's true;
Men do not sham convulsion,
Nor simulate a throe.

The eyes glaze once, and this is death,
Impossible to feign
The beads upon the forehead
By homely anguish strung.

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[1] Many of the ideas in this treatment of Dickinson are derived from Richard Sewall, "Reading Emily Dickinson," *Reports and Studies of the Second Yale Conference on the Teaching of English*, Master of Arts in Teaching Program, Yale University, 1961.

The final lines of the poem suggest the crown of thorns.

Others of Dickinson's poems reflect attitudes and treat subjects which one would have to regard as being in the "Transcendental" strain. In poem #9 (p. 34), Dickinson writes her "paraphrase" of Emerson's poem "Bacchus," a poem of transcendental intoxication which begins, "Bring me wine, but wine which never grew in the belly of the grape. . ." There are other poems, too, which show Dickinson in a transcendental state of mind, expressing a sureness about her position in the world and a faith in her own powers.

If we were to examine Dickinson's entire 1,775 poems, it might amaze us how many times the words agony, anguish, woe, Gesthemane, Calvary and the like appear. Concern for suffering is pretty much absent in Emerson, and in Whitman (the war poetry, etc.) one's attention is drawn not to the sufferer and his suffering so much as to the sympathetic vibrations of the narrator. Suffering is central in Hawthorne--educative, chastening, retributive, expiatory. So, too, in Dickinson, especially in Dickinson's poems about religion and love, suffering is at the center of the meaning of experience.

2. Nature and the Limits of Knowledge:

For the beginning poet of about 1860 there was no subject so used up as nature. Emily Dickinson rejected traditional approaches to Nature--nature as divine analogy, as escape from the evils of civilization, as healer and moral teacher, as the garment that veils the indwelling spirit--in short, all the attitudes that had run their course from Thompson's eighteenth-century "Seasons" to Bryant and Emerson. Wordsworth and Whitman had turned to homely aspects of nature: Wordsworth found God in a blackberry vine; Whitman preached the democracy of all created things. Dickinson wrote often about the oddities in nature, the usually overlooked or neglected. She wrote without the usual kind of mystique because she was more interested in perception than in "natural" religious intuition; her subjects are the fly, rat, bat, beetle, cricket, spider, hummingbird, frog, and snake.

For her, the artist's limited perception defines his purpose: not to imitate or describe the thing, but to analyze its significance. For Dickinson, the significance of a thing seems often to be judged by its appeal to her personal and distinctive fancy more than by any conventional symbolism. For example, the grass is not a democratic symbol of fertility but an aristocratic symbol of queenly leisure--like the lilies of the field that "toil not, neither do they spin." Recall Dickinson's poem about the grass:

The Grass so little has to do--
A Sphere of simple Green--
With only Butterflies to brood
And Bees to entertain--

And stir all day to pretty Tunes
The Breezes fetch along--

And hold the Sunshine in its lap
And bow to everything--

And thread the Dews, all night, like Pearls--
And make itself so fine
A Duchess were too common
For such a noticing--

And even when it dies--to pass
In Odors so divine--
Like Lowly spices, lain to sleep--
Or Spikenards, perishing--

And then, in Sovereign Barns to dwell--
And dream the Days away,
The Grass so little has to do
I wish I were a Hay--

Both Whitman and Dickinson celebrate the leisure of the grass, but Whitman's philosophy is that if a man will loaf with him at ease, "observing a spear of summer grass," he will find a kinship with nature and the Oversoul. God does not figure in Dickinson's poem at all, either as creator or as indwelling spirit. In her celebration of the leisure of nature, man is left out altogether. Whitman's democratic symbol is based on the pantheistic joining of God and nature and man; her symbolic use of nature keeps the three quite separate. The last line of her poem is "I wish I were a Hay." The singularity of the singular "a Hay" and the wistfullness of the subjunctive "wish I were" serve to emphasize how foreign the world of nature really is.

Two attitudes characterize her nature poetry: first, nature is separate from man, an excluding, alien country (When she thought she had discovered a "chain of being" in nature, it still did not include man.); second, nature is evanescent. The snake, that "narrow fellow in the grass" (poem #84), is not so much a snake as the place where he just was; the summer is not a treasure but a disappearance, sliding away imperceptibly into the death of autumn. All of the traditional systems of belief had broken down for her, so that she could use them only as part of her strategy of paradox.

How can the poet make use of the natural world if he cannot get "inside" nature by the transcendentalist's easy assumption of merger? Two possible answers were open to her: one, the only meaning is the objectiv reality, which can be grasped; or two, the true meaning lies inside the perceiver. These choices she debated in the voices of a poet and a skeptic in two poems in 1862 and 1864; the first on the oriole (#43) and the second on the lark (#72).

Split the lark and you'll find the music,
Bulb after bulb, in silver rolled,
Scantily dealt to the summer morning,
Saved for your ear when lutes be old.

Loose the flood, you shall find it patent,
Gush after gush, reserved for you;
Scarlet experiment! Sceptic Thomas,
Now, do you doubt that your bird was true?

The earlier oriole poem says that man creates the meaning; the lark poem, created after years of epistemological agonizing, claims that the analyzer, the dissecter, who says that man creates the meaning in nature, is left, in the end, with nothing but his perceptions. He can know only what he perceives in his mind, what he himself creates. He leaves himself, and the world, in a state of solipistic chaos.

Perception extracts one or more of many possible impressions of the object and then presents it as a pseudo-object, whether in poem or in scientific formula. This is the method of some of Dickinson's best nature poetry, in which these philosophical (epistemological) problems are not argued out but are so implicit in the background as to reverberate in the reader's awareness. She anticipates the belief of the twentieth-century poets in the magic transformations which the consciousness can make out of the world by a new union of word, thing, and thought. As she sees it, God has launched his "experiment"; it is the poet's task to create in a similar way, so that his poem also will contain the kind of dual significance he has discovered in nature by forcing experience into intelligible forms. Since his poems are man-made creations, rather than natural facts, he must "try," as nature does not need to, in order to make them "haunted with truth," as she wrote elsewhere.

Nature best serves the poet, then, not as a source of subject matter nor as a key to a cosmic meaning but as an artificial, molded exemplar. The poet can select certain aspects of nature, define his impressions of them and give them a quasi-symbolic value. Thus, the poet's true center is not in the outside world, but in the consciousness of that world, in an inner world of fiction rendered in words. Poets, in this view, create both heaven and earth, a heaven more attainable and a nature more satisfying than any the real world can offer.

The artist's limited perception suggests his proper responsibility, which is not to imitate the thing itself but to analyze its meaning for the human spirit. A short poem illustrates this point:

A little madness in the spring
Is wholesome, even for a King,
But God be with the clown
Who ponders this tremendous scene,
This whole experiment of green,
As if it were his own!

Dickinson knew the delight that makes the heart jump with the upsurge of the year and found it good, but any temptation to transcendental union with nature is negated by irony. "I taste a liquor never brew'd" gives us the poet, intoxicated by the elixirs of nature, who winds up in heaven dead drunk. "A little madness" says that the poet's springtime madness, his fancying that he can perceive what nature is, is "wholesome," provided he does not take his kingship literally and assume he is nature's owner. If he thinks nature is *his*, he is worse than mad; he is the King's jester, a fool.

The line, "This whole experiment of green," came to her, late in 1875, after considerable labor. She had first written, "This sudden legacy of green." Surviving rough drafts of the poem show many complex revisions of this one line. Before she arrived at the word *whole*, she had tried *sudden*, *fair*, *bright*, *fleet*, *sweet*, *quick*, and *swift*, all in various combinations with a second term which finally became experiment. Here, as with "whole," she made a disciplined search for the right word, rejecting the general and vague in *experience* and *periphery*; the cliche in *astonishment*; the shock term in *wild* *experiment*; the legalism in *legacy*;the doctrinal word for prophetic revelation in *apocalypse*. Finally, she settled on a word with scientific overtones, suggesting that nature is a process in which essential truths are searched out and proved experimentally. The confidence of science in her day that analysis would reveal the true meaning of nature has given way, in our time, to the theory that it provides, instead, only a highly abstract system of symbols as the most convenient method for keeping the books of science at the moment. This is close to Dickinson's concept of the symbolic understanding of reality to which man is limited.

Dickinson's "Whole experiment of green" is concerned primarily with animate nature, but it includes the inanimate as well. Another, seemingly trivial poem on a pebble emphasizes one of her major philosophical conceptions of nature: nature's separateness from man:

How happy is the little stone
That rambles in the road alone,
And doesn't care about careers,
And exigencies never fears;
Whose coat of elemental brown
A passing universe put on;
And independent as the sun,
Associates or glows alone,
Fulfilling absolute decree
In casual simplicity

The poem skillfully focuses attention on the stone with the shock of inverted logic by having the universe "borrow" its color from the "elemental brown" of the stone. The main thing to be noted here is the philosophical position: the stone is carefree because it fulfills "Absolute decree"; that is, it obeys not merely the laws of its own nature, but the universal laws that show themselves in suns as well as stones, planets as well as pebbles. The stone is "independent" and casual"; it "associates" harmoniously; it is literally unconscious of any disharmony or alienation in the universe. Such a happy state is impossible to man, whose consciousness separates him from this elemental harmony: he is concerned with "careers"; he fears "exigencies"; these two words, "careers" and "exigencies," evoke the human condition in a poem otherwise concerned solely with the separateness of nature. Thus, for Emily Dickinson, nature remains separate and evanescent. Its inner truth, veiled by these attributes, remains inaccessible. Man can not part the veil; nature does not yield itself to transcendental intuition. Nature remains "out there"--a thing to marvel at, to appreciate, to empathize with, but never to fully understand.

3. The "Self" and Nature:

Dickinson's best efforts in nature poetry grew more directly out of her theory of perception, which was that the outside world cannot be known by the consciousness, hence has no real meaning for man. He is left with only his perceptions, with what his mind creates:

> Perception of an object costs
> Precise, the object's loss;
> Perception in itself a gain
> Replying to its price.

What is lost is external reality, the object; what is gained is a mental equivalent, the perception. This perception the mind can body forth in a formula, a picture, or a poem. Since what the mind gains is the only reality the mind can know, perception defines the kind of beauty the poet can create. Dickinson's concern with what the mind loses (the object) led her to a corollary to her general rule limiting the artist's imitative powers--a theory of the continual vanishing of objective beauty before the poet's very eyes:

> Beauty is not caused, it is;
> Chase it, and it ceases;
> Chase it not, and it abides
> Overtake the creases
>
> In the meadow, when the wind
> Runs his fingers through it--
> Deity will see to it
> That you never do it.

Poem #146, one of several Dickinson poems about the hummingbird, masterfully catches both its separateness and its evanescense:

> A route of evanescence
> With a revolving wheel;
> A resonance of emerald,
> A rush of cochineal;
>
> And every blossom on the bush
> Adjust his tumbled head--
> The mail from Tunis, probably,
> An easy morning's ride.

The poet undoubtedly chose such an extreme example of elusive form in nature for its dramatic value, but the hummingbird fairly represents the more general truth which, in a letter, she expressed this way: "All we secure of beauty is evanescence." The miracle of the hummingbird is rendered in terms of motion, sound, and color intricately woven together by the poet's use of synaesthesia. We do not really see the figure of the bird at all, only its disappearing path across the field of vision. Unlike a multiple exposure on film, which records the apparent presence of an object in several places simultaneously, her first line records the simultaneous vanishing of the bird at every point. The second line helps to complicate this visual effect because it does not describe the actuality of vibrating wings so much as the optical illusion created by them. "A resonance of emerald" gives us both sound and sight images (an instance of synaesthesia) in one figure of irridescent color. No jewel offers quite the brilliance of cochineal, a pigment used since ancient times to make especially vivid reds--vermillion and scarlet. To see this spot of red on the hummingbird's throat, the poet-spectator-reader must take the stance of the flowers themselves. As the color is transformed into motion (a rushing assault), the hummingbird vanishes like the shining from shaken foil. In those first four lines, the poet has avoided the dilemma, "Is reality 'out there' or ' in here'?" Notice that she avoids this dilemma by simply ignoring it. She uses images to recreate the experience rather than using discursive means to analyze it. After the mounting tension of the first stanza, she seems to relax for two lines while the flowers compose themselves after their ravishment. Then she launches the daring image of her conclusion.

To emphasize how incredibly remote the bird's world is from hers, she uses an extravagant metaphor: "The mail from Tunis, probably,/ An easy morning's ride." That such speedy delivery may be within our competence in the 1960's is not a sign of Dickinson's prophetic powers but a reminder that we must understand her metaphor on her own terms if we are to feel the full effect of her bird's flight beyond the barriers of time and space. "An easy morning's ride" from exotic and infinitely remote Tunis could have been achieved only on a magic carpet. The hummingbird's performance is as far beyond understanding as would be that of the familiar, every-day postman if he came every morning from Tunis. To do so his route would really have to be a "route of evanescence;" and he'd be here and gone, with a "revolving wheel," "a resonance of emerald," and "a rush of cochineal." The poem itself performs the hummingbird's dazzling feat almost as brilliantly as the hummingbird does.

Poem #6: Poem #6 is one of several poems which transmit a perception of the evanescence of the seasons. This poem makes of the Indian Summer of October a beguiling counterfeit of real summer. Indian summer tempts a few birds, who had thought summer was over, back for a second look; it does not fool the bee, but it almost persuades the poet. However, knowing that the atmosphere is a prime creator of illusion, she avoids the sentimentalism of a Longfellow by calling October's blue and gold weather a "mistake." Then she makes her point by reminding us that these skies are just a resumption of the "sophistries /beguiling, misleading evidence/ of June." The hope of unending summer was just as plausibly misleading then, when life was at full tide, as it is now in Indian Summer.

The seeds in lines 10-12 bear two meanings: they bear "witness" to the death of the plant that bore them, and they hold a promise of immortality in the rebirth of the species. And, though the leaf hurries down to death, the pun on "altered"--calling up both the changed air of Indian Summer and the sacrament of communion (The Lord's Supper, the Eucharist)--implies its change into eternal life. The poet is now in a dilemma. She has reasoned from the evidence of nature, and she has arrived at the place where the apparent promise of life and the real evidence of death contradict one another. An unresolved paradox prevents belief; she cannot resolve this one except through some shallow feint of wit what would make her work of art valueless. She reverts to the scriptural allusion, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." If she becomes as a child, she can give a sacramental interpretation of the season in which the body and blood of this autumnal death, flaming leaf and decaying stalk, become symbols of immortality. But irony pervades this view also. The communion is "in a haze"--both the actual haze of Indian Summer and the haze clouding the vision that would see and believe. The "child" may suggest a first communion, but, as a mass for the dying year, these are last rites.

Let us now recapitulate: In the first six lines, the surface of things in Indian Summer suggests that life is everlasting, but this is an illusion of the "Indian giver," as it were. In the next six lines, the inner secret, first sensed intuitively and then explicity revealed, is that the year is really dying; immediately however, the paradox is reversed and the underside of death bears witness (in the seed) of rebirth, of altered elements. And, finally, with all the evidence against her, the poet says, "Permit me to become a child and partake, sacramentally, of immortality." The poem may be taken as a kind of "last communion" between a critical mind and a yearning heart.

Poem #157: "As Imperceptibly as Grief" is perhaps an even more subtle treatment of the life-death mystery in nature, for its resolution does not depend upon juggling paradoxes. In this poem Dickinson sought to catch the two sides of nature's processes by pin-pointing the very moment of transition. Summer "lapsed," then "escaped." Its last hours were "sequestered" in a "twilight" of "distilled" quietness, and the morning shone with a "foreign" light. Its departure was "harrowing," as though a cherished friend insisted on leaving without reason. Yet she knew there was no real reason for her feeling wounded, since summer never had been anything but a "guest" and parting was inevitable. By an insistent courtesy, summer effected her leave-taking: "Too imperceptible. . . to seem like perfidy." The near-betrayal attributed here to summer's going makes a curious reverse echo of the "fraud" of summer's pretending to stay in the preceding poem. Time is treacherous in both its illusions, whether of staying or leaving, of permanence or evanescence.

A more complex meaning is suggested by the opening simile, "As imperceptibly as grief." The comparison is suitable. Nothing lapses so imperceptibly as grief does, for one never feels, or at least never admits, any diminishing of it until the sudden realization that it has already gone. There is also some fitness in these hidden meanings, for summer is a grief for those whose eyes are set on autumn. There is, indeed, a recurrent autumnal note in Dickinson's poetry, a suggestion that life is mostly pain and that death is a release into some kind of eternal peace. She could find ample Christian precept for this spiritual outlook, her hymnal being filled with references to "this vale of tears" and yearning for deliverance into "Jerusalem, the beautiful."

The figure in the closing stanza may mean that summer "made her light escape" into heaven--though without benefit of a "wing." This may be another way of saying that the grief of human experience has been transformed into the beauty of her poem. Yet, the lapsing of summer into autumn, like the escape through death into immortality, would seem like a betrayal to the living if it did not come about so imperceptibly. Even so, it is a "harrowing grace," a painful blessing which lacerates the human spirit.

In neither of these two poems was Dickinson able to set forth any picture of repose; in both instances she had to let her feelings come to rest in ambivalence because her perception could penetrate no further. We may be assured that she would not stay long at rest, for she was to try again and again. We must remember that she was not trying to represent natural phenomena or to propound a doctrine or a philosophy, but trying rather to understand and to express what significant meaning nature's phenomena and processes had for her, and for all men.[1]

Poem #93: Another poem on the same subject is #93, "Farther in summer than the birds," one of her finest poems on the theme of the year going down to death and the belief in immortality:

> Farther in summer than the birds,
> Pathetic from the grass,
> A minor nation celebrates
> Its unobstrusive mass.
>
> No ordinance is seen,
> So gradual the grace,
> A pensive custom it becomes,
> Enlarging loneliness.
>
> Antiquest felt at noon
> When August, burning low,
> Calls forth this spectral
> canticle,
> Repose to gratify.
>
> Remit as yet no grace,
> No furrow on the glow,
> Yet a druidic difference
> Enhances nature now.

The reader probably finds this poem more difficult than any we have discussed so far. One reason is that it has very little paraphrasable content. That is, to figure out the syntax and then to restate in ordinary language what-the-words-say does not allow us to penetrate below its surface. The entering wedge is in the title, "My Cricket," which she attributed to the poem when she put it in a letter to a friend.

The cricket is the "minor nation" of line 3, celebrating "its unobstrusive mass." In calling the world of the cricket a "nation," the poet has elevated the insect above the status of mere insect and given him token membership in an organized society that has purposeful and conventionalized patterns of behavior. The reader should be prepared to consider the world of the cricket as analogous to his own world.

Having found our cricket in line three, we see that lines one and two are adjective phrases that modify the subject nation. So we must ask, in what sense is the cricket farther (or further, as some editions read) in summer than the birds? One might at first guess that the birds have migrated, following the summer weather south and leaving the cricket to meet the frost of autumn and the death of winter. But we learn a few lines later that the season is late August, considerably too early for any general migration. Then we remember that the cricket is the harbinger of autumn, for according to folklore his first chirp is supposed to mean that the first frost is only six weeks away. Thus we are led to realize that the situation of the cricket is very different from that of the bird. For the bird will survive the winter, whether he migrates or stays in Amherst, but the cricket will not survive. It is his lot to die, having first deposited eggs in hope of a continuance of his kind. Thus, he is indeed "farther in" the abundant life of summer, for he is almost at its end.

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[1] cf. poems 8, 122, 162, and 93.

The cricket's ceremony of song is an annual ritual, and the poet makes of this ritual a mass, both for the dying year and for the about-to-die cricket. The significance of her calling it a mass is that a mass celebrates the promise of eternal life given the disciples through the divinity of Christ at the Last Supper. The mass is "unobstrusive" because there are no visible evidences of it and because, obviously, it is not directed to human ears--a fact that again emphasizes the separation between the worlds of man and of nature. So, it is a spectral canticle, with no visible singers, celebrants, or ceremonies. In stanza two, the lines

> So gradual the grace,
> A pensive custom it becomes,
> Enlarging loneliness

suggest that grace (the free, unmerited favor of God) is won slowly by the cricket's unceasing devotion to his mass, a devotion so unremittant that for both him and the poet it becomes a thoughtful custom. And, though the observance of this custom may seem public to us, actually it is carried on in such deep privacy as to be oblivious to all but itself, thus "enlarging loneliness."

Here now is an ambiguity. The position of the word becomes in "A pensive custom it becomes," renders its meaning ambiguous. We have already shifted its position once, to read "It becomes a pensive custom," from which we get two meanings--one for the cricket and another for the poet. We might be permitted to shift it again to read "A pensive custom becomes it," where becomes has the meaning of appropriateness. That is, "It is appropriate that this custom be observed pensively." And now, the word observed has become a pun that helps to strengthen the different but relevant meanings for cricket and for poet.

One should now have no difficulty in reading stanza three, unless it be with the last line, which one may understand to say that the purpose of the canticle (a sacred song in honor of the Christ) has been to obtain repose in order to gratify a spirit troubled about its own continuance beyond physical death.

Stanza four tells us that the poet's (and cricket's) dedication to the ritual has not yet gained any sure promise of grace. On the other hand, there is no "furrow on the glow" of that promise--neither the "furrow" of the displeased, furrowed brow nor the spring furrow the husbandman turns in fertile soil to being a renewal of life to the world of nature. Yet, having probed so deeply into the world of nature by identifying herself with the plight of the cricket, the poet now feels more strongly than ever before that ancient and mysterious forces operate in the world of nature; nor can she help feeling that mankind must once have been in tune with, perhaps subject to, those forces. The way of knowing these forces has long been lost to man; he can come no nearer them than hints and guesses.

The controlling metaphor of the poem is the idea of a mass for the dying year, for the about-to-die cricket, and, by analogy, for each of us. The mass honors the promise of life eternal.

4. Immortality:

Poem #110: The Transcendentalists find eternity everywhere; not so Dickinson. "Farther in Summer than the Birds" gives as eloquent and moving a representation of Miss Dickinson's thoughts on immortality as we could hope for. Of immortality she said, "That is the flood subject," as indeed it was, overflowing into many a poem and letter. It challenged the symbol-making power of her imagination and provoked her to rational argument. Some of her apparent assertions of faith on this subject are really a part of her strategy of paradox, in which immortality is ever-present, yet too remote to understand; it is the object of highest aspiration and attainment, yet it is secondary to the heavenly joys attainable on earth; it is unattainable on earth; it is unattainable and unknowable, yet a necessity; and so forth.

Emily Dickinson's strategy of paradox can be quickly illustrated in Poem #110. In the first stanza, immortality is a comforting idea when we feel no pressing need for it; but when it becomes a necessity, it is out of reach. The second stanza says, in effect, Oh, yes, we are convinced of heaven's promise; but if it were not for heaven's "marauding hand," we would not need the promise, for we would have heaven on earth. In #119, we find the paradox again. In this poem, Dickinson rejects the absurd economy of accepting Heaven as a place where life's hurts are healed (by that time, it's too late) or as a place of reward where all the pains of life are compensated in bliss: "that negotiation/ I'm not a part to."

"Going to Heaven," like #119, is representative of a group that, having the ring of orthodoxy at the outset, are nonetheless clearly experiments in fantasy that turn the worn images of conventional faith against themselves at the end. "Going to Heaven," it proclaims with the exultant confidence of a gospel hymn--yet twice punctures its own inflation with banality: "I don't know when!" and "How dim it sounds!" The singer asks meekly for just a bit of crown and the smallest robe, then concludes abruptly. The balanced predictions of the last stanza, "I'm glad I don't believe. . .I'm glad they did believe," separate the poet sharply from the orthodox. The double meaning of "it would stop my breath" emphasizes the power of death over and above the glory of resurrection that is hinted at in the final phrase describing the burial, "the mighty Autumn afternoon." For herself, she still prefers the wonder of this life--"to look a little longer at such a curious world.'

All the evidence from Emily's writings suggests that she was unsure of her belief in human immortality and of her belief in the existence of God. She was neither able to find a solution in the religion of her time and place nor content to rest in non-belief. Tension between faith and doubt remained a constant element in her mature life. A late poem sums up her lifelong problem:

> Those dying then,
> Knew where they went;
> They went to God's right hand;
> That hand is amputated now,
> And God cannot be found.

Her speculations led her to the metaphysical idea that perhaps the reality of heaven, like the reality of the external world, exists only in the mind, an idea she expressed in another poem:

> The brain is wider than the sky,
> For, put them side by side,
> The one the other will contain
> With ease, and you, beside. (1st of 3 st.)

Poem #10: Here is another of Emily Dickinson's poems on death, one which reflects many of the attitudes and technqiues discussed above:

> Safe in their alabaster chambers,
> Untouched by morning and untouched by noon,
> Sleep the meek members of the resurrection,
> Rafter of satin, and roof of stone.
>
> Light laughs the breeze in her castle of sunshine;
> Babbles the bee in a stolid ear;
> Pipe the sweet birds in ignorant cadence,--
> Ah, what sagacity perished here!
>
> Grand go the years in the crescent above them;
> Worlds scoop their arcs and firmaments row,
> Diadems drop and Doges surrender,
> Soundless as dots on a disc of snow.

In the first stanza, the humble dead are left to sleep in white silence; in the third, the mighty dead, indicated by "diadem. . . and Doges," surrender and drop. . . The untouched by light in the first stanza is echoed by soundless in the third. (This is another example of synaesthesia, a kind of cross-correlation of the senses.) Pursuing the suggestion in the astronomical images that cluster in stanza three, we deduce that the final image, "disc of snow," is the Milky Way. Thus, when "diadems drop," the souls of the mighty dead disappear into the cold immensity of inter-stellar space, "Soundless as dots, on a disc of snow." The transcendental concept of death as the individual soul merging with the oversoul is cheerless enough in the abstract; in her poem, made concrete by an astronomical metaphor, it is chilling. By implication, the same destiny awaits the humble dead of stanza one, for their destiny was not pursued there but left hanging as a point from which to measure the immensity of infinite space and unending time, the comfortless view brought in by the new science.

Standing between the frozen expectancy of the faithful in their alabaster chambers and the frozen oblivion promised by science, life on earth proceeds apace (in stanza two), its ecstacies rendered in cliches: "laughing breeze, piping birds, and babbling bees." The birds and bees are as oblivious of our condition as they are of that of the "meek members of the resurrection," and their babblings fall upon our "stolid ear"--possibly because so much "sagacity perished here." The meaning is obscure. Miss Dickinson left two unfinished versions of the poem, and, apparently, never made up her mind between the two, for she never resolved them into one. At any rate, the poem draws a sharp contrast between the brief life of "sagacity" on earth and the change that comes with death, be it resurrection or extinction.

5. Death:

Poem #77: Notice what the use of the word "kindly" does in stanza 1. It tells us at once that the poem will be different from the sentimental or horrific death poems that litter 18th- and 19th-century tradition. Emily Dickinson wrote often of death, but she was not what is called a "grave-yard poet." The word "kindly" signals that here there is no fear, horror, or "Come, sweet death" sentimentality. The word obviously suggests gentleness and grace but also gentility, the politeness and distance that characterize the relations between gentleman and ladies. Death comes gently but firmly--and we see in the rest of the poem how the sense of firmness, inevitability, and awe grows gradually, as the carriage passes the children at recess wrestling in the ring (not playing, note, but wrestling with that curious seriousness with which children work at their play) and as it passes the field of gazing grain--that is, staring fixedly, impersonally, unseeingly, even (it has been suggested) with a kind of deathlike gaze. There is no hysteria, no panic, no sad farewell. She is saying simply, "This is what the passage from time to eternity must be like."

Poem #36: The most vivid embodiment of life Dickinson knew in her mature years was her cherished nephew next door, and his unexpected early death affected her deeply:

> "Open the door! Open the door! They are waiting for me," was Gilbert's sweet command in delirium. Who were waiting for him? All we possess we would give to know.--Anguish at last opened it, and he ran to his little grave at his grandparent's feet /her parents/. All this and more; though is there more? More than love and death? Then tell me its name!

Those questions she was never able to answer; no one can. Love may be the crowning glory of life, but one becomes aware of its transcendent value only when confronted with its loss in death. The juxtaposing of love and death, loss in the grave raising the hope of eternal reunion, is probably the oldest motivation to a belief in immortality. Death is loss, of course, but Dickinson did not write about specific instances of loss. For her, death is mystery; it is release from pain; it is the threshold of heaven.

"I heard a fly buzz when I died" presents an original concept of death. The poem uses the orthodox religious vocabulary of New England, but with a difference. In stanza two, the orthodox assumptions about death are explicitly gathered up into one phrase to describe the moment of death, "That last onset, when the King/ Be witnessed in the room." But notice how He is witnessed! She has squandered her last breath distributing trivial keepsakes. Instead of the music of wings taking flight for heaven, there is the "Blue, uncertain, stumbling buzz" of a fly in her dying ear. Instead of a vision of the hereafter, this world simply fades from her eyes; the light fails, and then she "could not see to see." In structure, in language, in imagery, this poem is an ironic reversal of the conventional attitudes of her time and place toward the significance of the moment of death. (Your students should be cautioned not to read this poem as an attempt, morbid or only curious, of Dickinson to forsee her own personal death. Dickinson's almost-perfect control of the poem, both technically and emotionally, belies any such reading.)

Poem #4: The panoply of the funeral procession serves a dual role for Dickinson in this poem: first, it embodies the teasing, frustratingly ambiguous character of death; and, second, it serves as vehicle for the dramatic fiction, as a kind of emblem for dramatizing her reaction to death. The resulting tensions dignify the poem:

One dignity delays for all,
One mitred afternoon.
None can avoid this purple.
None evade this crown.
Coach it insures, and footmen,
Chamber and state and throng;
Bells, also, in the village,
As we ride grand along.

What dignified attendants,
What service when we pause!
How loyally at parting
Their hundred hats they raise!
How pomp surpassing ermine,
When simple you and I
Present our meek escutcheon,
And claim the rank to die.

At our funerals, she says, attentions such as we have never known in life are lavished upon us: "Coach, footmen, Church and state and public, bells, dignified attendants, pomp, and ermine--When simple you and I/ Present our Meek escutcheon,/ And claim the rank to die." The meek escutcheon can only be the tombstone, hopefully to be exchanged for a heavenly shield later; the subject, whatever his status in life, can now claim only the *rank* to be admitted to death. One *becomes* such a king only when he dies.

Poem #70: Here is a fine example of Dickinson's condensed line:

There is a finished feeling
Experienced at graves--
A leisure of the future,
A wilderness of size,

By death's bold exhibition
Preciser what we are
And the eternal function
Enabled to infer.

If one were to rewrite the poem--and ruin it in the process--it might go something like this: There is a finished feeling which one experiences at the grave of one who has just died. He feels the future stretching out lesiurely until its size seems almost as great as a wilderness. By death's bold exhibition we learn more precisely what we are and we are better able to infer what eternal death means (or perhaps, what is the eternal function of death--that is, to give us a last, inescapable judgment as to our own nature).

6. Love and The Mystical Lover:

Poem #17: The following poem, one of Emily Dickinson's best known, seems as good a place as any to begin considering her love poems:

The soul selects her own society,
Then shuts the door;
On her divine majority
Obtrude no more.

Unmoved she notes the chariot's pausing
At her low gate;
Unmoved, an emperor is kneeling
Upon her mat.

I've known her from an ample nation
Choose one;
Then close the valves of her attention
Like stone.

This poem may relate to her choice of a life of seclusion at about this time, preferring her own small circle and closing the door on the general world. But the select "society" of the first stanza seems specifically related to the chosen "one" of the third, suggesting a lover. It is possible to identify this one as muse, rather than lover; the "one" might even be God, an interpretation suggested by the fact that her choice is possible at spiritual maturity--"divine majority." On the other hand, "divine majority" may be simply an indication of the sanction given by her choice of one person. The chosen one becomes, for her, a "majority" in the political sense. Other people simply don't count with her once the choice is made.

In these early poems there is certainly some fusion of three great events in her life that seem to have occurred at almost the same time: her withdrawal from the world, her dedication to poetry (to which we might add her further withdrawal in the early decision not to publish her poems), and her preoccupation with the image of a beloved. Whether her devotion is to an earthly or a heavenly lover, in this poem she is unmoved by the petitions of others, closing the "valves" of her attention to them. The "valves" in this climactic image make the exclusion a vital one; further, they suggest an instinctive closing off of communication in all directions except the life-giving one. To all others she turns a heart of "stone," the "shock" word that makes her choice final.

The largest group of her successful love poems centers on the rites of marriage. These move steadily away from the human institution, which was not within her experience, toward several versions of the betrothal in heaven. In the marriage poems, the bridegroom is conspicuous by his absence. For centuries, worldly love, whether fully realized or not, has been the paradoxical image of human aspiration toward spiritual union with God. The poet has felt that the lure of the flesh must be overcome and has used sexual love as a figure for divine love. (cf. especially John Donne, St. John of the Cross, George Herbert, St. Teresa of Avila, Song of Solomon.) The dominant images of Dickinson's love poems are royalty and marriage, images drawn from allegorical interpretations of The Song of Songs and the book of Revelations (cf. Appendix to "Hebrew Religious Narrative: Grade 7" Unit for an account of Biblical allegory and poetry).

Poem #94: Students should be asked to keep the "Song of Songs" and "Revelation" close at hand in reading Dickinson and to bear the allegorical meaning of the Bridegroom-Bride relationship in mind as they read these poems. Dickinson uses the Biblical images--sometimes straightforwardly, sometimes ironically.

The central image is a royal marriage, but a curiously incomplete one. There has been a change of status, but the sign of that change is denied three times: "Without the sign. . . All but the crown. . . (and) Without the swoon [of joy] God sends us women." In earthly marriage, the loss of virginity becomes the gain of consummation, but not here. The double-ring ceremony, "garnet to garnet--Gold to gold," conjures up all the rich sensuousness of the physical union denied her. Also denied is the normal fulfillment of marriage, to be "Born--bridalled--Shrouded--in a day," in the taking of a new identity, a new life, and the sloughing off of the old. Hers will be a spiritual union with the redeemer, consummated through redemption. That union is yet to be consummated: The "wife" has the title of Empress only in an "acute degree," suggesting the pain rather than the glory of her elevation. Her empire is Calvary, filled with the agony of expiation, but also with the promise of grace. As royal empress, she is "Wife. . . without the sign," the withheld "sign" of death (Preparatory to her union with God), which, when it does come, will confirm her song, saying for the first time, "My husband!. . . stroking the melody; / Is this the way?" The spoken phrase, "My husband," putting a catch in the voice of one who will never speak it in this sense, binds the conclusion back to the paradoxical "Wife" of the beginning: deprived of one status, she has not quite achieved the other and more glorious one. She is asking, out of her earthly inexperience, whether earthly marriage holds any clue for the heavenly one.

Poem #44: "Mine by the right of white election!" is a companion poem expressing the ecstasy of her aspiration to the divine. In addition to the images of royalty, this poem employs clusters of religious and legal images. The "election," of course, refers to the Puritan doctrine of salvation for the elect. The "white," a color that permeates her writings--with quite divergent meanings--here signifies at once the heavenly bride and the biblical color associated with the regenerate, as in "Though your sins be scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." Notice not only the white, but, in line three, the scarlet of sin. In this poem, the hold of the heart is reduced to the vanishing point, while the soul rises to a state of supreme ecstasy, though it can rise in this life only to heavenly betrothal, not marriage:

Mine by the right of the white election;
Mine by the royal seal!
Mine by the sign of the scarlet prison
Bars cannot conceal!

Mine, here in vision and in veto!
Mine by the grave's repeal,
Titled, confirmed, deliricus charter!
Mine, while the ages steal!*

*steal--i. e., pass (steal away)

7. Style:

Students may have difficulty with Dickinson's laconic style. The following remarks may help you assist them in seeing what the style is doing. The power of words is immensely important to Dickinson. In a letter written when she was fifteen, she expressed an attitude toward words from which she never departed:

> I was very unwell [she wrote her friend Abiah Root] at the time I received your letter & unable to busy myself about anything. Consequently, I was downspirited and I give you all the credit for restoring me to health. At any rate, you may have your share. It really seemed to give me new life to receive your letter, for, when I am rather low-spirited, nothing seems to cheer me so much as a letter from a friend. At every word I read, I seemed to feel new strength & have now regained my usual health and spirits.

As Dickinson matured, her growing reverence for the word diminished her early prodigality with language. Perhaps, having a lawyer father, she tried the sterotyped phraseology of the law. She did become an admirer of the style of the hymns she sang in church and may have decided to make something of it. Yet, one wonders why she didn't develop the smooth and musical style of Tennyson, her influential English contemporary. It appears that she developed an intuitive poetic taste of her own with the condensed, packed, carefully chosen word at the center.

"I'll heal you," she wrote to her Norcross cousins when they were ill:

"Tell the doctor I am inexorable, besides I shall heal you quicker than he. You need the balsam word." "Let Emily sing for you," she wrote to them later, after a bereavement, "because she cannot pray." And to another friend, "Wish I might say one liquid word to make your sorrow less." But later on, to an Amherst professor who asked if he could call, "I have no grace to talk and my own words so chill me." And again, "Amazing human heart, a syllable can make to quake like jostled tree." "A word is inundation, when it comes from the sea." And so she concludes another letter to her cousins, "We must be careful what we say," and appends the poem that begins "A word left careless on a page. . ." It might be said that her aim as an artist was never to leave a careless word on a page; every word had to work. "Whenever my words are fluent," she wrote, "I know them to be false." The economy with language which she achieved was the result of unusual discipline and continuous practice. There is evidence, for example, that she made practice drafts of even her shortest letters; many of the poems that have come to us are merely practice drafts which she never got around to polishing. Seemingly, she was discontented until she had removed all the nonessentials, all the connectives and transitional tissue, and many of the conventional grammatical signals which make life easy for the reader. In her best poems, every word bears its full weight until the lines fairly leap with meaning. She often casts away the normal logic of grammar and syntax to make her poems carry more freight. Her poetry is full of ellipses which challenge even the most attentive and sensitive reader. This economical use of language is responsible for what we call her condensed line--the main words are there, telescoped as closely as they can possibly be.

A very significant characteristic of Dickinson's style is revealed effectively in Poem #103 (p. 107):

> To tell all the truth but tell it slant,
> Success in circuit lies,
> Too bright for our infirm delight
> The truth's superb surprise;
>
> As lightning to the children eased
> With explanations kind,
> The truth must dazzle gradually
> Or every man be blind.

The countess Bianchi, Dickinson's niece, tells us that "She loved to fence in words with an able adversary. . . She loved metaphor, a paradox, a riddle." "Circumlocution," her niece went on to say, "she despised." She could, when she chose, speak out directly. Her conclusions hit the mark with the directness of an arrow. In her poems, she could "scalp your naked soul" with amazing economy of language when she wanted to. However, her characteristic way of thinking was metaphoric, "telling the truth slant." This operated on two levels: first, plain enjoyment. She loved getting at things that way, for the sheer intellectual joy of it:

> Our friendship, Sir, shall endure till sun and moon wane no more, till stars shall set, and victims rise to grace the final sacrifice. We'll be instant, in season, out of season, minister, take care of, cherish, soothe, watch, wait, doubt, refrain, reform, elevate, instruct. All choice spirits however distant are ours; ours theirs; there is a thrill of sympathy--"a circulation of mutuality"--*cognotionem* *inter nos*! I am Judith the heroine of the Apoch [Apocrypha] and you are the orator of Ephesus. That's what they call a metaphor in our country. Don't be afraid of it, sir, it won't bite.

Look again at #103. Truth, she writes, is too bright. It must be made known to us only indirectly, as lightning is kindly explained to children to ease their fear of it. The truth must come only gradually, or every man will be blinded. Metaphor will do the job.

Many of Dickinson's metaphors are playful. Consider this little quatrain:

> Faith is a fine invention
> When gentlemen can see--
> But Microscopes are prudent
> In an emergency.

This poem suggests that the "wise man," or perhaps the naive man, can rely on faith for his understandings of immortality, but the unwise, or perhaps the intelligent man--those not so filled with faith--may need to have a practical way of getting at truth. The irony is tough and un-Emersonian.

Robert Frost wrote that metaphor is "saying one thing in terms of another, the pleasure of ulteriortiy." Dickinson's poems are full of ulteriority (cf. #126, p. 122):

> Until the desert knows
> That water grows
> His sands suffice;
> But let him once suspect
> That Caspian fact,
> Sahara dies.
>
> Utmost is relative,
> Have not or have
> Adjacent sums;
> Enough, the first abode
> On the familiar road
> Galloped in dreams.

One would take a great many more words to explain this idea directly. A dissertation couldn't catch all the resonance of the short expression--"That Caspian fact." This is a cryptic poem; the ulteriority of its idea challenges the reader, forces him to turn the poem this way and that to try to find its meaning, just as an art dealer may turn an impressionistic painting this way and that to determine which is the top and which the bottom.

Metaphor was more than a skillful exercise for Emily Dickinson. It became her way of looking at life objectively. [cf. the following poems: poem #230--blacksmith metal, suffering; forge, conscience; #553; #48; #13. Notice how, in each poem, metaphor objectifies, gives clinical distance to, intense subjective experience.]

V. Composition Exercises

Each of the exercises which follow asks the student to examine carefully some aspects of style in the Transcendentalists and then to apply what he has observed to his own writing. The teacher should feel free to use as many of these exercises as seem to be useful for his students.

A. The Paragraph in Emerson:

Emerson's prose has been described as composed of "all sentences and no paragraphs." One does often feel that, for Emerson, the sentence is the ultimate unit of thought. Look, for example, at this paragraph from "The Over-Soul":

> Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching. The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet are they so cheap and so things of course, that in the infinite riches of the soul it is like gathering a few pebbles off the ground, or bottling a little air in a phial, when the whole earth and the whole atmosphere are ours. Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but the casting aside your trappings and dealing man to man in naked truth, plain confession and omniscient affirmation.

Why is this paragraph difficult to read and almost impossible to make sense of? If your students recall their work on rhetoric (Grade 10, "The Rhetoric of Short Units of the Composition"), they may be able to suggest some of the problems.

To begin with, we need to look for the structure of the paragraph. Beyond taking the first sentence to be a first-level sentence, we can do very little analysis without encountering problems. The second sentence divides naturally into two parts (breaking after "written"); of these parts, the first is a second-level statement and the second a third-level statement depending syntactically from "utterances":

1. Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word catching.
    2. The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written,
        3. yet are they so cheap. . . etc.

The third sentence would seem, by its position, to have some dependence on something in the preceding sentence; that is, "there" demands an antecedent. One would normally look for a locus in the preceding sentence. Two places ("earth" and "atmosphere") and one quality described metaphorically as place ("in the infinite riches of the soul" is likened to "the whole earth and the whole atmosphere") can be found in the second sentence, but none of them makes sense as a locus where "nothing can pass. . . but the casting aside your trappings. . ." Casting about with the ingenuity born of despair, we can find an acceptable locus for "there" if we go all the way back to the first sentence and take "there" to mean "in conversation with a mind that is 'grandly simple.'" This conflict between logical dependence (based on meaning) and apparent syntactical dependence (based on position) creates perhaps our most serious problem in understanding the paragraph. One way to eliminate this dilemma would be to reorder the sentences:

a. Sentences Rearranged (1-3-2 now)

> Converse with a mind that is grandly simple, and literature looks like word-catching. Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but the casting aside your trappings, and dealing man in naked truth, plain confession and omniscient affirmation. The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet are they so cheap and so things of course, that in the infinite riches of the soul it is like gathering a few pebbles off the ground, or bottling a little air in a phial, when the whole earth and the whole atmosphere are ours.

We now find very little problem in giving "there" an antecedent. Notice also that the first element of what was the second sentence follows as well (or better) after "naked truth" as it did after the first sentence. The structure of the paragraph by levels now looks something like this:

1. Converse with. . .
    2. Nothing can. . .
        3. The simplest. . .
            4. yet are they. . .

One more pronoun, "it" in the last sentence, needs a referent. Since "it" obviously has something to do with writing "the simplest utterances," the logical dependence of "it" is just what its syntactical dependence (based on position in our re-ordering) suggests that it would be. For all these reasons, rearranging the sentences as we have done seems to strengthen the paragraph.

Looking at the "new" paragraph we have made, your students might next notice that, while the first sentence seems to have a coordinate form, its meaning is subordinate. We might, then, look to see if there are other places where Emerson's meaning can be clarified by adding or changing connectives. We might notice next that "naked truth, plain confession and omniscient affirmation" is a strangely mixed series. Looking at more of Emerson, we find that he generally separates all the items in a series with commas. Why not here? The answer, one suspects, is that we are dealing not with a series but with an appositive--"plain confession and omniscient affirmation" are in apposition to "naked truth."

We might wish also to indicate in some manner the way in which what is now the third sentence depends from the second sentence. Next, "so things of course" gives many readers pause. "Of course" is not, in this sentence, a parenthetical expression. Supplying a connective or modifier might help clarify this phrase. Finally, we must begin to unscramble the meaning of the final sentence. We should be able to guess that the sentence sets up, however vaguely, some sort of analogy in which "it" (whatever "it" is) relates to "the infinite riches of the soul" as gathering pebbles and phials of air relates to the earth and atmosphere. Let us see how many of the problems we have noted can be ameliorated by providing and changing connectives:

b. Connectives Added; Subordinate Structures Used

> When you
> (If you) converse with a mind that is grandly simple, literature looks like word-catching. Nothing can pass there, or make you one of the circle, but casting aside your trappings, and dealing man to man in naked truth, (which is to say) plain confession and omniscient affirmation. (Indeed,) The simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet are they so cheap and so (much) things of course, that in (comparison with) the infinite riches of the soul it is like gathering a few pebbles off the ground, or bottling a little air in a phial, when the whole earth and the whole atmosphere are ours.

The paragraph can now be read somewhat more easily. There remain problems of several kinds, notably the following:

1. What is the referent for "there"?
2. What is the "circle"? There is, in the preceding sentence, no referent in suitably parallel form.
3. The last part of the second sentence seems awkward.
4. Sentence three needs to be two sentences or else to have the relationship between its parts more carefully delineated. Its first part depends syntactically from the preceding sentence, but its second part depends both syntactically and logically from its first part.
5. The analogy of the last sentence demands clarification, both in establishing a referent for "it" and in recasting the analogy in a parallel structure which will suggest the relationships among the terms of the analogy.
6. Finally, we need to do on paper what a conscientious reader does mentally--to change whatever else needs changing in order to make the paragraph comprehensible while still keeping as close as possible to both the letter and the spirit of Emerson's work. Such alteration is a rough, catch-as-catch-can kind of process, but it is indispensable.

Your students will find some of their previous exercises in rhetoric (Grade 8, "Syntax"; Grade 10, "The Rhetoric of Short Units of the Composition") helpful in making the kinds of revisions suggested above. The re-casting which follows claims no special authority; you (or your students) may be able to do much better. However, we have tried to follow the principles of rhetoric suggested in previous units and to violate the tenor of Emerson's work as little as possible:

c. Rewritten "Intuitively"--Pronoun Referents Guessed At--Rearrangement and Connectives (a and b) Retained

> When you converse with a mind that is grandly simple, literature comes to look like word-catching. Nothing can pass in such conversation, or make you one of the circle of such minds, except casting aside your trappings and dealing man to man in the naked truth of plain confession and omniscient affirmation. Although the simplest utterances are worthiest to be written, yet so cheaply are such utterances to be had, so much matters of course have they become, that to single them out from among the infinite riches of the soul is but to gather a few pebbles off the ground and to bottle a little air in a phial out of the whole earth and the whole atmosphere which are ours.

You should now ask your students to examine this final revision carefully and to determine what has been gained and what lost in clarity, in effectiveness of imagery, and in forcefulness of style. You may want to work through this detailed example with them. Then, when the students seem to have some grasp of the idea that revision can be systematically done according to established rhetorical principles, ask them to rewrite one or more of the following paragraphs (or others you select), to analyze their reasons for making changes, and to defend the changes they do make. (These paragraphs are arranged in order of increasing difficulty.)

> What I must do is all that concerns me, not what the people think. This rule, equally arduous in actual and in intellectual life, may serve for the whole distinction between greatness and meanness. It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know what is your duty better than you know it. It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.
>
> --Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

> This voice of fable has in it somewhat divine. It came from thought above the will of the writer. That is the best part of each writer which has nothing private in it; that which he does not know; that which flowed out of his constitution and not from his too active invention; that which in the study of a single artist you might not easily find, but in the study of many you would abstract as the spirit of them all. Phidias it is not, but the work of man in that early Hellenic world that I would know. The name and circumstance of Phidias, however convenient for history, embarrass when we come to the highest criticism. We are to see that which man was tending to do in a given period, and was hindered, or, if you will, modified in doing, by the interfering volitions of Phidias, of Dante, of Shakespeare, the organ whereby man at the moment wrought.
>
> --Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Compensation"

> Revelation is the disclosure of the soul. The popular notion of a revelation is that it is a telling of fortunes. In past oracles of the soul the understanding seeks to find answers to sensual questions, and undertakes to tell from God how long men shall exist, what their hands shall do and who shall be their company, adding names and dates and places. But we must pick no locks. We must check this low curiosity. An answer in words is delusive; it is really no answer to the questions you ask. Do not require a description of the countries towards which you sail. The description does not describe them to you, and to-morrow you arrive there and know them by inhabiting them. Men ask concerning the immortality of the soul, the employments of heaven, the state of the sinner, and so forth. They even dream that Jesus has left replies to precisely these interrogatories. Never a moment did that sublime spirit speak in their patois. To truth, justice, love,the attributes of the soul, the idea of immutableness is essentially associated. Jesus, living in these moral sentiments, heedless of sensual fortunes, heeding only the manifestations of these, never made the separation of the idea of duration from the essence of these attributes nor uttered a syllable concerning the duration of the soul. It was left to his disciples to sever duration from the moral elements, and to teach the immortality of the soul as a doctrine, and maintain it by evidences. The moment the doctrine of the immortality is separately taught, man is already fallen. In the flowing of love, in the adoration of humility, there is no question of continuance. No inspired man ever asks this question or condescends to those evidences. For the soul is true to itself, and the man in whom it is shed abroad cannot wander from the present, which is infinite, to a future which would be finite.
>
> --Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Over-Soul"

When the student has worked at Emerson long enough to have developed the habit of analyzing paragraph structure systematically, he can try his hand at some of the paragraphs which follow. All four of these paragraphs were written by eleventh-grade students. The first is rather a poor job, the second somewhat better, and the last two clearly superior:

> Henry David Thoreau had an outlook on life like no one before him. His philosophy or his definition of philosophy is as follows. "The science which investigates the essential character of reality, its universal principles and laws or the conditions under which it is known." He also says of a philosopher, "To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtile thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to it's dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust." By reading this we can figure that Thoreau was all for schooling. He, himself, attended Harvard at the age of sixteen. He worked under Ralph Waldo Emerson for two years, as a handyman and kicked up a few things. He defines "Classics" as "the noblest recorded thoughts of man." He continues, saying, "They're the only oracles which are not decayed, and they're such answers to the most modern inquiries in them as Delphi and Dodona never gave." I believe the passage speaks pretty much for itself. He writes what he believes. He seems to be a man who thinks for himself.

I felt the poem set a picture of the modern world: people asking of the past - no true knowledge of what brought about things of the present. Their interest lies in who won the war and each individual battle but not in the lives of those who fought. So he brings out some of the hardships faced by a doctor to show the individual side of the war; the hard, cold facts of fighting. He goes into great detail describing the seriousness of men's wounds and to what extent one might go to prevent any more harm to men--"Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death! In mercy come quickly."

In September the Fitch bird (Mustela Putorius Aves) returned to Walden, his perennial autumn sanctuary. He announced his arrival with the bellow so unmistakebly typical of his species. A month later, as I went to replenish my wood box, I chanced upon the nest of the female Fitch bird which had been haphazardly constructed of dried corn husks and soggy tree leaves, routed from their state of decay. Shabby and unkempt as it seemed, it fully met the requirements placed upon it by its sole tenant, for the mating season would not arrive until spring, and another migratory urge would carry this puppet of instinct further south in a very few weeks. Vacancy of this dwelling, even during a mild New England winter, would mean sure destruction of the nest, and once again the materials would return to their original raw status.

These rare creatures began an exotic dance which was accompanied by the rhythmic bellows of what seemed to be their leader, who had stationed himself on Heather's rocking chair. Their bodies and necks enacted an undulation comparable to nothing I had ever seen. Their movements were followed by a series of somersaults and headstands. Then all was still. The performers formed symmetrical lines and waited at attention. A rustle of wings began in the back of the line, and, as the emotional epidemic spread to the front, individuals who received the message began to march in place. When the fore-most bird was informed, a disorderly mob of beaks and feathers unleashed itself in my direction, and I let out a bloodcurdling scream for help.

As a final step in this exercise, the student should be asked to reexamine whatever formal themes he has written for this unit. (In-class themes are usually too weak; at any rate, what we are after is a conscious effort to improve work which the student may have considered already finished.) He should be asked to select two paragraphs, one of his best and one of his worst, to analyze them according to the rhetorical principles he has been reviewing, to rewrite them as well as he can, and to defend his changes. In short, the student is being offered a workable method for improving his own compositions.

B. Connectives in Whitman

The material which follows is largely self-explanatory. Such resource material as may be needed can be found in the 8th Grade "Syntax" unit.

Much has been made of Walt Whitman's use of co-ordinate constructions; many critics argue that his use of co-ordinate constructions comes to fulfill a thematic function by placing the things named on a level of perfect equality. Your students may find it useful to look closely at the following passage. Ask them to mark all the connectives in this passage according to the scheme indicated below:

▭ --Co-ordinate word connector
⬚ --Co-ordinate phrase connector
⧈ --Co-ordinate clause connector
○ --Subordinate word connector
◌ --Subordinate phrase connector
◎ --Subordinate clause connector

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?

I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I
  know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe,
  and am not contain'd between my hat and boots,
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and[1] every one good,
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.
I am not an earth nor an adjunt of an earth,
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as[2] immortal and
  fathomless as myself,
(They do not know how immortal but I know.)
Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,
For me those that have been boys and that love women,
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,

---

[1] "no two alike" and "every one good" are absolute phrases, as are the phrases in the next line.

[2] this "as" is an adverb.

For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the
mothers of mothers,
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot
be shaken away.

--"Song of Myself"

As a second step, the student might then try to rewrite the passage, using as many subordinate structures as possible without doing violence to what Whitman says. He should discover that he can recast the introductory and concluding statements:

If anyone supposed it lucky to be born,
I hasten to inform him or her that it is just
as lucky to die, and that I know it.

* * ** * *

Undrape, for you are not guilty to me, nor stale,
nor discarded,
For I see through the broadcloth and gingham. . .

The body of this section, however, seems to resist any such alteration. It seems to be impossible to recast this body of comparisons and catalogues into subordinate structures without doing serious violence to Whitman's intention. To draw any critical conclusions, one would have to take many more samples than one. We might say, however, that, at least in this section, Whitman's form is optional when he is stating general propositions (introduction and conclusion). But when he is celebrating things or people, his form comprises a necessary aspect of his content.

As a final step, the student might be asked to write a poem on another subject using as great a proportion of co-ordinate constructions as this poem does. Your better students might be asked to duplicate the poem structure-for-structure. (In so doing, they should discover that a style so exaggerated lends itself admirably to parody. A poem about, for example, football games or exams could hardly avoid becoming a parody of Whitman's exalted tone and high seriousness.)

C. Discourse and Imagery in Emerson and Thoreau:

Early in this unit, a comparison pointed to Emerson's preference for generalized discourse and to Thoreau's preference for concrete imagery. As a starting point for this exercise, the teacher could ask his students to compare the closely parallel statements cited on page 24 of this packet. Students should be asked to notice what is gained and what lost in each author's presentation of essentially similiar meanings.

As a second step, the student could be asked to write a discursive parallel, in the style of Emerson, for each of the following images from Thoreau (all taken from"Economy"):

> Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt?
>
> Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born?
>
> The portionless. . . find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.
>
> [You make] yourselves sick, that you may lay up something against a sick day.
>
> As if you could kill time without injuring eternity.
>
> What everybody echoes or in silence passes by as true to-day may turn out to be false-hood tomorrow, mere smoke of opinion, which some had trusted for a cloud that would sprinkle fertilizing rain on their fields.

Finally, and this is no doubt the most difficult part of the exercise, the student might be asked to try creating concrete images, in the style of Thoreau, to parallel each of the following statements from Emerson (all taken from "Self-Reliance"). This is no easy task, but those students who enjoy writing, especially those who enjoy writing poetry, will find few more valuable ways than this to sharpen their writing ability.

> In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty.
>
> A man is relieved and gay when he has put his heart into his work and done his best; but what he has said or done otherwise shall give him no peace.
>
> I suppose no man can violate his nature.
>
> Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself.
>
> It is for want of self-culture that the superstition of traveling, whose idols are Italy, England, Egypt, retains its fascination for all educated Americans.

For every thing that is given, something is taken.

There is no more deviation in the moral standard than in the standard of height or bulk.

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

THREE THEMES IN AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

PART II: SIN AND LONELINESS

Grade 11

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Experimental Materials
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center

SIN AND LONELINESS

Grade 11

CORE TEXTS:

Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter, (New York: The Macmillan Company, Literary Heritage Edition, 1961).

Herman Melville, Four Short Novels (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., Bantam Classic FC16, 1961).

Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: The Macmillan Company, Literary Heritage Edition, 1961).

William Faulkner, The Unvanquished, foreword Garvel Collins (New York: The New American Library, Signet Classic CD9, 1961).

SUPPLEMENTARY TEXTS: None

OUTLINE:

I. Neo-Calvinism and Pessimistic Fiction:
    A. Background
II. Allegory and Pessimistic Fiction
III. Bibliography
IV. The Scarlet Letter
    A. Realism and Allegory
    B. Hawthorne's Theme and His Allegory
        a. The Opening
        b. Hester
        c. Pearl
        d. Hester Again
        e. Chillingworth
        f. Dimmesdale
V. Billy Budd
VI. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn
    A. Genre
    B. Evil in the Ante-Bellum South
VII. The Unvanquished

The eleventh grade unit on "Sin and Loneliness" builds, pretty obviously, on the tenth grade unit which deals with the same subject. The tenth grade unit speaks of three senses of the word "sin": (1) sin conceived of as a social alienation--as to whatever in society frustrates the individual's will and purpose, whatever gives him the sense that either his design or will must be "wrong" or the designs and "wills" of other men, groups, or natural forces must be (*The Return of the Native*); (2) sin conceived of as such alienation from a benificent Creator as comes from rejecting whatever of the goodness of the Creator may be seen in the creature (*The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, "Young Goodman Brown"?); and (3) sin seen as some kind of alienation from the Christian God, that is as disobedience to the commands of Christ and the authority for which he spoke (*Resurrection*). The three definitions or conceptions of sin-and-alienation studied in the Grade 10 unit are limited; as the eighth grade unit on "Words and Their Meanings" points out, such a word as "sin" has a whole family of meaningful uses. No literary methodology is given primary attention in the 10th grade unit: the works studied use the devices of allegory, symbolism, exemplum, evocative setting, and "stylized" plot etc. to communicate their picture of man's essential "sin" and "alienation." In this unit, the authors studied use all of the devices studied in the tenth grade unit but they tend to be allegorists--or at least to draw on the resources of allegory. Moreover, they tend to do what R.P. Blackmur once described Emily Dickinson as doing, to dramatize the essential accuracy of the psychological content of the Christian dogma of the Fall without accepting its theological framework fully or perhaps even in part. Sin is not seen in them primarily as frustration (except perhaps in one version of Melville proposed below); it *is* seen as alienation from other men and, in some cases, from "nature". The extent to which "sin" is regarded as "alienation-from-God" or "from-the-Christian-God" by any of these writers is a matter of serious scholarly controversy, controversy which this unit and its bibliography endeavor to represent. The unit should also be studied against the background of the following units:

Grade 7: *The Meaning of Stories*
Hebrew Religious Narrative

Grade 8: *Beowulf and The Song of Roland*.

Grade 9: *Satire* (e.g. *Billy Budd*).

Grade 10: *Sin* and *Loneliness*.
Tragedy.

I. Neo-Calvinism and Pessimistic Fiction:

A. Background

The four novels treated in this unit show the influence of one of the most powerful currents in nineteenth-century American thought, which we will call, for the sake of convenience, neo-Calvinism. This tradition is historically closely related to its great opponent, Transcendentalism (see "Individualism and Nature," Grade 11). Though some of the assumptions and concerns of the opponents are similar, the opinions and attitudes of the neo-Calvinists contradict those of the transcendentalists. A really adequate treatment of the subject would require at least a volume. For teachers who have the time and curiosity for a fuller explanation, a bibliography is attached. For those whose time is severely limited, this essay is offered as a very brief history and summary of the major tenets of Calvinism (and its neo-Calvinist modifications) as these contrast with Transcendentalist tenets. No teacher, of course, will become an expert on the still vital issues described here by reading this essay. It is to be hoped that the information given below will prove useful as an outline of a public cast of mind that participated in the private visions of reality presented by Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Faulkner. It should be noted that no one of them is entirely explained when seen against Calvinist tradition, and what each inherits from Calvinist tradition is not completely portrayed in any of the four novels.

Philosophy is sometimes said to be a footnote to Plato. Yet, it is unnecessary, for our purposes, to trace the ideas with which we are concerned any farther back than to the Elizabethan reform movement within the Anglican Church which was called Puritanism. Originally, the reformers called Puritans wanted only to simplify the ceremonies of the service and were orthodox Anglicans in theology and their views on church government, but they soon becams interested in bringing the English Church closer to the kind of Protestantism practiced on the Continent. As the political situation in England grew more restless in the period before the revolution (1641-1660), the Puritans called increasingly for political reform, demanding that Romish "high church" Anglican forms of religion be replaced by forms more Genevan, non-liturgical and non-episcopal, demanding further that Parliament be established as the final authority in government as opposed to the monarch. The American Puritans, as every school boy knows, first came to America in the, for Puritans, harsh times which preceded Cromwell's revolution.

American Puritanism, like much Seventeenth Century English Puritanism, was Calvinistic in theology, taking its primary intellectual tenets and some of its social ideals from John Calvin (1509-64). Calvin, a French protestant forced to flee from his own country to Geneva, Switzerland, because of his opinions, became the leader (and near-dictator) of the Genevan theocratic city-state. The primary theological controversy in which he engaged after his rise to power was a controversy with the Lutherans about the meaning of communion. However, after his death, his followers were mainly identified by their heavy emphasis on original sin and on predestination. Their theological premises were given definitive form at the Synod of Dort in 1618 in "the Five points." The "Points" were as follows:

1. Men are totally depraved; both the will and reason of all men were hereditarily corrupted by Adam's fall. Therefore, man cannot exercise free will in "choosing" to accept grace.
2. Men are unconditionally elected to grace--regardless of the fact that they cannot perform any works that could save them.
3. God's grace is prevenient and irresistable; those who are to be saved cannot avoid being saved; nobody else can avoid being damned.
4. The elect, the "saints," will persevere; those who are to be saved cannot do anything that is not holy.
5. Christ's atonement is limited; Christ atoned for the depravity of only a part of the human race, and this atonement is made available to the elect by the Holy Ghost, which gives them the "supernatural" power to obey God's will.

In the colonies, the Puritans subscribed to Calvin's idea of a theocratic state. His theology was sometimes combined with that of the Covenanters, an English group of unorthodox Calvinists who maintained that God had promised man eternal life on condition of his obeying the moral law and who argued that since, after Adam broke the first covenant, God made another with Abraham, man obviously still had the power to make reasonable choices and the capacity to strive for moral perfection. This doctrine does not deny election, but it mitigates the more severe implications of the doctrine of unconditional election by seeing man as a party to a contract with God instead of as completely helpless in his relationship with Him. The covenanters regarded punishment for a sin as expiatory, not (as did orthodox Calvinists) as an inherent and endless necessity placed on man because of his permanent corruption.

New England Calvinists tended to use the "congregational" system of Church government rather than the government by presbetery which they had commonly advocated in England. They regarded Christ as the head of each congregation, and each congregation as an equal member of the Christian family. Any ecclesiastical hierarchy was obviously out as was the centralized presbyterian system of colonies further south. From about 1641 to about 1833, the congregational polity was generally in fact, although not in law, required "established" polity in New England. In 1662, the original requirement that first-generation Calvinists had to have a personal experience of conversion before becoming full members of the church, while their children were automatically full members (except that they could not take communion), was relaxed by the Half-Way Covenant, which permitted grandchildren of members the same rights as children of members. About the turn of the century, the congregational system of church government began to be influenced by "presbyterian" ideas of church government, and, during the Great Awakening (1734- c. 1750) Calvinism of various sorts grew strong again and then more or less broke down under the impact of Unitarianism and other forces significant in the development of "liberal Christianity."

The term "puritanism" is, narrowly speaking, appropriate to either the theology or the form of church government described above. It is also loosely used to describe a rigid, severe, and somewhat grim moral tone that is often supposed to have been maintained by the New England colonists. Calvin's ethics seem to have had more staying power than his theology (although Presbyterians and Baptists as well as Congregationalists still uphold more-or-less Calvinistic theologies), perhaps because Calvinistic morality is well suited to a hard working, frontier, middle-class society which regards sobriety, industry, achievement, and progress as valuable and looks with suspicion on anything that might interfere with them.

The sanction (enforcing power) of Puritan morality was certainly partly the fear of offending a righteous God, but by extension, the fear of offending His saints. Modern writers may regard with contempt such fear as finds place in the religious experience (cf. the essay by Einstein in the 10th Grade, "Man's Picture of Nature" unit) or they may regard it as the essential, most important aspect of man's experience of the Holy (as does Rudolph Otto in The Idea of the Holy). In any case, teachers should remember that their purpose is to make students understand what the Calvinistic experience was like as a genuine religious experience and not to render it ludicrous by parodying it and so transforming the course into a less full thing than it ought to be. The doctrine of Calvin sometimes led to the idea that those who were admirable in the eyes of the community were the elect, those who seemed to have been given the grace to try to obey God's will, those who seemed to be capable of obedience to the moral law. The moral law was stated in the Bible, and could, as the Puritans saw it, be applied in their time--a time which given the problem of taming the frontier required a special emphasis on keeping down "the flesh" and "the Devil." The sins of "The World" were to be avoided too, but perhaps not so as to make the world an entirely unprofitable place. The Puritan, like Chaucer's Monk, had to ask "How shall the world be served?" Conformity to the Puritan sexual and social ethic was demanded and enforced in Seventeenth Century New England. A totally depraved mankind required vigorous and punitive rule.

In the climate generated by the Calvinistic emphasis on man's wickedness and on eschatology (last things--especially, in this context, the Day of Judgment) people tended to experience profound emotional and spiritual crises.

To the Puritan mind, the devil was extremely important; evil was regarded as a positive force--not as an absence of power or a result of weakness. The attitude toward evil was that it should be destroyed when discovered, and it was discovered frequently. In the famous Salem witchcraft trials, hatred of the sin took precedence over love of the sinner, and the quality of mercy was or so it appears to the modern observer--somewhat strained. The Puritans regarded suffering as necessary, but not necessary, but not necessarily as rehabilitating. They regarded the "world" as evil and life as a tribulation through which it was necessary to pass to escape Nature--a malignant, perhaps even depraved, power. Among less extreme Puritans, life was regarded as a battle with temptation (the flesh and the devil); and Nature was treated as often inimical to man's enterprises. Nature, according to

Calvin, does not reveal, but tends to conceal God. The pessimistic view of human nature, life, and its environment combined with the belief in a justifiably angry God produced a morality in which a striving against internal and external obstacles to a rather superhuman and, to us, perhaps somewhat legalistic perfection was supported both by a profound sense of religious guilt before God and by a highly developed sense of possible shame before the community. The whole of the Puritan's life was startlingly moral.

Only in New England in its most Genevan and somber times way was anything like the reduction of Puritan life described above really lived. The settlers of New England were strong enough to carry out heavy moral and practical tasks with a good deal of verve, energy, and even comeliness. Although they were little given to the plastic arts--their only sculpture was sculpture of grave-stones--they built handsome homes. Of course, their very first settlements were primitive log cabins which the Norwegians and Swedes taught them to build, and tent-like structures imitating the Indian tepee--but the later houses and churches were attractive. Samual Eliot Morrison, writing of this aspect of Puritan life, says, "Far from condemning the beautiful, the generation which planned the New England villages, dividing the fields,and building the first houses, seemed incapable of making anything ugly. If their laying out of homestead, village common, stone wall, road, and meeting house was unconscious, the more credit to their instinct; for it was done in harmony with the lay of the land, the contours of the valley and slope, the curve of stream and shore . . . The Massachusetts Puritans disliked extravagance: but they appreciated comeliness, whether in a ship, a house, or a woman; and they loved bright-colored paint on ships and houses--but not on women. An example in point is Captain John Endecott, so rigid an iconoclast that he defaced the cross on the English ensign as an emblem of idolatry and superstition. Yet Captain Endecott tricked out the trim of his great house at Salem with scarlet paint, hung carved bargeboards under the eaves, and lived there well and generously. Puritan costume was distinguished from court costume by comparative plainness, and absence of lace and spangle, rather than by color. Only the ministers followed the tradition of black garb, others wore clothes of gray, green, and dark blue. . . Governor Bradford left a red waistcoat with silver buttons, a colored hat, a violet cloak, and a Turkey-red grogram suit." Interior decorations of houses were equally rich, Critics have said that we get our main impression of the somberness of the Puritan in his house and clothing from The Scarlet Letter, and that Hawthorne's view is factually inaccurate. Hawthorne undoubtedly gave his characters drab homes and clothing to suggest the drabness of their lives. He was, of course, an artist, not a historian of domestic art. The Puritans actually left us a tradition of substantial and pleasing houses and a grace of interior decoration and furnishing that is widely imitated today.

The early Puritans were sometimes fanatical in behavior. For example, the theology of Calvin powerfully preached with its terrifying pictures of damnation and hell-fire drove some people to the verge of insanity. If you will turn to Johnathan Edward's Faithful Narratives or Cotton Mather's Magnalia, you may read the piteous stories of little Pheobe Bartlett and little Anne Greenough, each aged five, blighted and driven crazy in their nurseries by fear of death and hell; and for that reason exhibited as prodigies of infant piety. The constant preaching of Calvinistic principles of damnation gave rise at times to acute mania in Puritan communities. Sometimes these fits ofmadness were taken as a manifestation of the immediate presence of the Deity. At first this mania took the form of persecuting Baptists and Quakers. The most notorious outbreak was the Salem Witchcraft Craze of 1691-92. The people had become convinced that Satanic influence was very close to them, that many heretofore respectable citizens, mainly women, had sold their souls to Satan and were bewitching others of the community. There were accusations and counter-accusations, hysterical denials and hysterical confessions. Before the mania had run its course, nineteen innocent people and two dogs (presumably innocent too) had been hanged as witches. The trial is one of the darkest blots on early America.

The descendants of this group were far less energetic. Their concern for respectability, or exhaustion, or both, lent a stultifying prudence to their actions and the discretion of secrecy to their strong emotions.

Transcendentalism may, for our purposes, be regarded as the other side of the Calvinistic coin. The individual person and his destiny are paramount in both systems. In both, man is thought to occupy a universe controlled by a moral and religious power. Both regard a proper relationship with this power as the main concern of humanity, and both regard this relationship as consisting of a personal experience of the divine on one hand and of adherence to a demanding ethic on the other. The major shift is in the view of Nature--human, divine, and mundane. Man is powerful, not helpless, in the transcendental view. He is naturally good, not evil. Instead of being subject to foreordained depravity, he is obliged to try to fulfill his own potentiality in his own way--to listen to his own heart. Instead of submitting to his fate, he is to find his destiny. God remains mysterious, but is no longer a personal and angry judge; He has become a beneficent and vague embodiment of Nature, through which he is revealed, and which shares his beneficence. Jehovah, a personal God, is transformed into a rather vague Over-Soul. The great moral task of the Transcendentalist is to outgrow convention and the mundane concerns so that he could begin to be himself. Tolerance is a necessary virtue in such an individualistic philosophy. Evil becomes "misunderstanding." Sins are demoted to the level of "mistakes that can be corrected." Fear is no longer regarded as either necessary or useful in morality. Aspiration toward self-fulfillment seems to the Transcendentalists a proper and sufficient motive for morally admirable behavior.

To many people, the transcendental philosophy seems somewhat weak stuff both emotionally and intellectually in comparison to its predescessor. It may seem "Polyannaish" in its picture of man, naive in the picture of the moral and political governance which he needs, and simplistic in its view of the physical universe. Certainly men who have learned from the Calvinists have lent a heroic stature and depth of imagination to much of our finest literature.

The nineteenth and twentieth Century writers with which the unit deals all treat of Calvinistic cultures: Hawthorne, of Puritan New England; Melville, of Puritan New England in Moby Dick and of a kind of "Puritan" governance in Billy Budd; Twain, of the Puritan Midwest and South, and Faulkner, of the Puritan South. All more or less deal with culture in which Calvinist, conservative Protestant, or fundamentalist religion plays a central role in the lives of the people. But the four authors studied in the unit not only treat American-Puritan religious culture as a subject. They also comment upon the religious content of that culture in complex ways, adapting from it the sense that man is terribly and severly cut off from perfection while seeking alternatives to its picture of the foreordained, supernatural route through which man may become more Godlike or more truly human. Let us take simplified versions of the "vision" of our writers and set it beside two parts of the "vision" of the Synod of Dort those having to do with sin and regeneration:

I. First: Men are totally depraved according to the articles of Dort:
____ Hawthorne: Man is severely limited by the passionate folly on the one side and calculating rationality on the other, both of which prevent his perfecting himself or his society.
____ Melville: Man has a "stutter," a certain innate weakness which flaws his innocence and disposes him to destructiveness in inciting circumstances.
____ Twain: Man has an inheritance of the "animal" in him which comes from father and family as much as from the "code" of civilized and religious societies.
____ Faulkner: Man receives, as an inheritance from the past, a "curse" which is so deeply imbedded in his codes, his habitual ways of acting, as to constitute almost an innate, or natural, curse.

II. Second: According to the Articles of Dort, men are unconditionally elected by a grace which comes only to some men, a grace which they will persevere to death and from which they cannot fall.
____ Hawthorne: Men are "saved" by suffering their way beyond pride, a suffering to which they are "elected" by circumstances
____ Melville: Men are destroyed or rescued by necessity (one version of Melville).
____ Twain: Men are "saved" from corrupting civilization and themselves by escaping to the wild.
____ Faulkner: Men are saved by a "grace" which they achieve for themselves in substituting self-sacrifice for vengeance.

Whereas all four of our authors accept neo-Calvinistic views as to man's limited nature, they do not propose Calvin's dependence on God and His irresistable power as the answer to human pride. Refusing to say with Calvin, "Without God, we can do nothing," they seem to be saying "Without suffering, we can do nothing". Our authors do not accept Calvinist doctrines straight in other areas. Melville and Hawthorne see wild physical nature as having the malicious fallen side which the Puritans saw in it, but they also seem to see it as a source of freedom and regeneration. Twain, in Huck Finn, and Faulkner, more obviously in The Bear than in The Unvanquished, see the wild wood as a kind of perpetua

Eden, the source of the innocence which men may know. Like the Puritans in the new world, our authors distrust most forms of individualism which run counter to community values—any individualism but particularly the individualism of the Transcendentalists. Hawthorne generally distrusts such individualism profoundly though he allows Hester to keep her inner purposes unviolated; Melville may also (according to one reading of Billy Budd); Twain has no sense of what Emerson's kind of individualism might be, and Faulkner regards the Southern individualist—the Snopes, the man uncontrolled by social codes—as the last of the lower brutes. None has satisfied the social codes but none would, like the Transcendentalist, have men live about, above, or beyond them. To them man is too red in tooth and claw for that.

II. Allegory and Pessimistic Fiction:

The technique of our authors in part derives from the broad traditions of Christian allegory, a tradition which may be as important for an understanding of our authors as the traditions of Calvinist theology in Puritan cultures. Though Puritan exegetes generally rejected the extensive allegorizations of the scriptures proposed by medieval exegetes and described in the unit on "Hebrew Religious Narrative, (Grade 7)," they continued to make use of the typological comparisons between the Old and New Testament which they found to be scripturally based: Jonah's "sign" and the Resurrection; the flood and baptism; Moses' serpent and the crucifixion; Sarah and Hagar and the New and Old Law, and so forth. Moreover, many of the old scriptural emblems which were no longer regarded as legitimate as interpretations of Scripture were, nevertheless, passed down to later generations as part of the common Puritan reading of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, Spenser's Faerie Queene, and Quarles' emblems. Hawthorne constantly uses a broad spectrum of allegorical reference: the dark wood of temptation, the dove of grace or gentleness, the scriptural connotations of the Scarlet woman of the Apocalypse, of light, darkness, serpents, weeds, and so forth. Melville uses a more limited repertory of scriptural loci for his allegories, mostly scriptural symbols connected with the fall, certain limited references to the life of Christ and a few symbols from Paradise Lost. Twain does not significantly build his allegories out of Scriptural materials (though Scriptural material comes into the conversations of his hypocrites); rather, he creates the resonance of his work through building up, within his work, the symbolic or "allegorical" overtones of such material objects as the river, the river bank, the forest, the town and so forth. On the other hand, Faulkner is much more willing to use traditional Scriptural allegory for his personal symbolic purposes. Students will not recognize every scriptural reference, capture every symbolic detail, or catch the manner in which tradition Judeo-Christian iconology is manipulated by these authors to make a personal symbolic statement. They should be alerted to this kind of thing--by a concordance perhaps and certainly by a teacher who knows Judeo-Christian iconology and symbolism.

If the teacher has to tell the students what a symbol has traditionally meant, that does not eliminate his need to analyze what it means in the particular fictional context.

That the writers in this packet use orthodox Christian-Calvinist emblems and, in some cases, reflect the imaginative impact of one or another dogma does not mean that their fiction can legitimately be reduced to fables to confirm popular modern White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant ways of thinking about what man is and what he must be. Students will do this with legerdemain facility. Most critics of these writers see them as creating a speaking picture of human life which is profoundly unorthodox in many of its implications though impossible without the Calvinist vision. Students who come up with facile interpretations for writers of the profundity of Faulkner, Hawthorne, Melville and Twain need to be questioned and probed and asked to submit specific evidences for their views--to put together from the text the symbolism, the plot, the syntactic devices of the work under study to see what these add up to. Then if they see our authors as speaking for an orthodoxy in an ordinary way, they may know *what* they are saying. And if they see them speaking for something for which they cannot give a conventional account, they will have to provide equally firm evidence that what they see is really in the book.

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IV. The Scarlet Letter

A. Realism and Allegory: The Opening and the Theme:

Hawthorne's guiding principle as a writer was to employ scenes, persons, and incidents which seem on the surface real enough--unlike the fantastic allegorical figures of Beowulf or Spenser. However, he surrounded his believeable fiction with a shadowy atmosphere colored with allegorical overtones appropriate to his own time. For The Scarlet Letter he chose a "real" Puritan community of the first half of the seventeenth century and gave it a dimension which enabled him to represent nineteenth century concerns.

The setting in the "Custom-House" chapter is a general metaphorical introduction to the extended metaphor which is the novel; the custom-house is neither natural nor fully human and moral. It is rather human and dehumanized: here we are indebted to an essay in The (Complete) Scarlet Letter by Professor Sam Baskett. The contention of this essay is that the reader of The Scarlet Letter may not legitimately ignore "The Custom-House" since it clarifies and extends the meaning of the romance itself. In the two parts of the book Hawthorne weaves a pattern of repeated comparisons and contrasts which relate the speaker in the book to his ancestors, the present to the past, and the nineteenth-century world of the Custom-House to the seventeenth-century world of New England theocracy. Most obviously, 19th century Salem is the child of 17th century Salem; and the Custom-House characters are the descendants of the Puritans. In approaching the Hester Prynne materials, Hawthorne, through the Custom-House records, leads the reader back to the immediate past, then to the Revolution, and eventually to the mid-seventeenth century, alternately considering his discoveries in their supposed historical context and as they impinge upon and define his own predicament. Several symbols point up the contrasts between the two centuries. The "scarlet letter" itself signifies that no individual action escaped the attention of 17th century theocratic society. Puritan life, rigid and somber, had a unified meaning, symbolized by the meeting house from which civil and religious authorities looked down upon the scaffold, the jail, and the market place. The Election Day procession near the close of the book symbolizes the stability, dignity, and integrity of a society unfragmented into religious, political, and commercial components. The procession contrasts with the pointless shuffling through life of the custom house officials. The scarlet letter, once a vital symbol, appears in the nineteenth century as a threadbare rag. The Custom-House itself represents the tedious aimlessness and the decay of nineteenth-century America as the scarlet letter and meeting house had once represented the cosmic quest of Puritan New England. Salem and the Custom-House in their dilapidated state are an inconsequential microcosm of a political--as opposed to a religious--society. "A Custom-House officer . . . (by) the very nature of his business . . . is of such a sort that he does not share in the united effort of mankind." The Custom-House gives its denizens no sense of meaning--as opposed to opportunistic--participation in the human community.

The 19th century Custom-House overlooks the market place (page 4): "the shops of grocers, block-makers, slop-sellers, and ship chandlers." If the market place in the seventeenth century was an instrument entirely subordinant to the ultimate purposes of the judgment and salvation of mankind, it and its tax house now dominate the community. What the Pharisees left, the publicans have taken over. Hawthorne's characterization (pp. 3-4) of the publicans, those for whom market place activity has become the purpose of life, firmly establishes his point. The ship's owner, gracious or sulky in accordance with his profit or loss; the wrinkled, careworn merchant; and the "wolf-cub" clerk, already scheming for his rise in the world. The octogenarian Inspector, who lives only for his palate and a full belly, is notable for the perfection of his animal nature, the moderation of his intellect, and for his maintaining barely enough moral and spiritual sense to keep him from walking on all fours. Hawthorne concludes that he had "no soul, no heart, no mind; nothing, but instincts." The gallant old General (pages 14-17) has an inner life composed of recalled childish "scenes and sounds," a young girl's fondness for smelling flowers, and one set of "memorable words": "I'll try, Sir!" The one man who is adapted to the Custom-House is the modern business man, expert in office routines, and a robot. These six, the Custom-House Hawthorne uses to contrast with the "men of civil eminence" of Puritan times: "What we call talent," he summarizes, "had far less consideration than now, but the massive materials which produce stability and dignity of character a great deal more."

The artist in the Custom-House is part of the symbolic configuration. He is the Chillingworth of the 19th century. The "Custom-House" chapter is about the artist's alienation from his subjects and society in a materialistic time. The Scarlet Letter, about the sinner's alienation from his society in a religious time. Alienation is the subject of much of Hawthorne's best work: Young Goodman Brown, The Minister's Black Veil, The Bosom Serpent, The Prophetic Pictures, Rappacini's Daughter, and the Birthmark (these should all be read by the teacher who wishes to understand Hawthorne.) From the beginning and Young Goodman Brown, Hawthorne was concerned with the nature of original sin as he understood it. He was also concerned with what happened to those who did not understand man's imperfection, with the alienation which set in those who took the optimistic view of human nature. As Hawthorne pictures the optimistic, they tend to be surprised by the discovery of human depravity; Goodman Brown is so surprised by his own and his neighbor's guilt as to be rendered cynical and incapable of love or faith. The discovery of human fallibility becomes the source of a deeper alienation than that rooted in any original imperfection which Brown or his "Faith" ever had. In the Scarlet Letter "Custom House" section, Hawthorne is, by extension, concerned with the infection which sets in artists who do not recognize that too optimistic a demand for perfection in one's imperfect subject, marred by a birthmark or a scar, may so dehumanize one that he seeks excellence without compassion and displays faults without charity. The artist who knows his subjects clinically "insulated from the mass of human kind," cannot be an unselfconscious part of society and he may come to be as fierce and inhuman as is young Goodman Brown or Chillingworth. The "persona" in the Custom House section sees its shufflers as Chillingworth sees Dimmesdale and Hester--in a clinical light. His hope of escaping imperfection leads to the profoundest of imperfections.[1]

The breach of the Seventh Commandment is not the theme of The Scarlet Letter; rather it is man's conscious response at the discovery of "original sin," man's tendency to place himself in cold hearted alienation from his fellows; the characters in the book can be arranged in a spectrum as they are affected by the birthmark and learn to live with it, as they transform it without removing it and as they seek to destroy their fellows to destroy their imperfections. The "persona" in Custom-House lies at the Chillingworth end of this moral spectrum. He needs to learn the meaning of the "fable" he discovers.

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[1] Hawthorne's most explicit statement concerning original sin comes in "Ethan Brand," in 1851, a year after the publication of The Scarlet Letter. Brand is a meditative and skeptical tender of a lime kiln who leaves his quiet life and goes abroad in the world in search of the Unpardonable Sin. After eighteen years of search and study, during which time he achieves eminence in all the intellectual disciplines, he comes back home and destroys himself in his old lime kiln; he has found the Unpardonable Sin in his own heart, the sin of intellectual pride. Hawthorne is far less disturbed than Emerson by the dangers of conformity, of dependence, of compromise; he is far more disturbed by the evil wrought in man's nature by his conscious or unconscious separation of himself from his fellows as a result of his making "proud" demands on them.

Hawthorne's purpose in the main plot is to trace out the effects on his different characters of their efforts as citizens of a theocracy to deal with the alienation which is a response to and rooted in original sin. His basic assumption may be that some kind of punishment for alienation and "pride" is inevitable but that its form and results are not inevitable. The punishment may be taken in different ways and used for different purposes. Hawthorne first makes Chillingworth the spokesman for the idea that pain must follow evil when he declares, in an interview with Hester, that what has happened could have been predicted when they were married. Chillingworth's own fate is so intertwined with that of Hester, her child, and her partner in guilt that he does not think of leaving them, any more than Hester thinks of escape. Hester's other meaningful ties are broken, but with Dimmesdale there is the "iron link of mutual crime which neither . . . could break:' they had a "joint futurity of endless retribution." Chillingworth is no less fatalistic in describing his own role in the tragedy. To Hester's plea that he spare Dimmesdale, he answers, "It is not granted me to pardon . . . by thy first step awry thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity . . . It is our fate." Note that the necessity or "fate" described here is like Calvin's "predestined necessity" in being "necessary" but unlike it in being "this-worldly." Chillingworth's feeling about the inevitability of suffering's following evil is justified by the plot--in a way that nothing else which he says is--but Chillingworth does not understand what suffering is for: Hawthorne's seventeenth-century people do not, in the main, suffer meaninglessly. At their best, they suffer to learn a love which the Custom House "persona" does not know. To suffer in the seventeenth century world of the *Scarlet Letter* means to undergo such suffering as is absent in Emerson and in Whitman and as cannot be experienced in the non-religious, commercial culture of the Custom-House; it is to suffer expiatory and retributive suffering which destroys the capacity to love (Chillingworth) or suffering which nurtures it (Hester). Meaningful suffering is Hawthorne's version of grace--suffering which leads to the destruction of intellectual pride and the renewal of the capacity to love. In *The Scarlet Letter*, the one thing upon which all the townspeople could agree was that Hester and Dimmesdale had served their fellowmen well. Hawthorne's conviction is quite clear that the original alienation of man from man--what is wrong in the world--can be righted by nothing unless it be by love. What is wrong with the Custom-House is that there is finally no love there. It is a *Waste Land*. Behind its 19th century desert is an older 17th century world of flaming blacks and reds but also of cool oases.

B. Hawthorne's theme and his allegory

Hawthorne is at his best as an allegorist when he uses a combination of Biblical and natural symbols, the kind of natural symbols studied in the seventh grade packet on "The Meanings of Stories," the kind of Biblical symbolism described in the seventh grade unit on "Hebrew Religious Narrative." Hawthorne apparently learned the art of allegory from the Bible, from Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (cf. 12th grade, *Christian Epic*), from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, and from the emblem books used in Puritan homes as vehicles of religious instruction (Francis Quarles, etc.). If one remembers to keep his knowledge of Biblical allegory and of Spenser and Bunyan about him, he will be better prepared to handle *The Scarlet Letter*.

a. The Opening

The theme of the book is symbolized in the first chapter in static symbols. The prison door reminds one of the antiquity of sin--that man has always been a sinner. The burdock and other unsightly vegetation growing on the grass plot near the prison door suggest the blight of evil and wrongdoing on the town; the prison is part of civilized society. The rose bush is a sexual symbol but it is properly associated with the warm-hearted Christian woman who has been martyrized by the stern Puritan magistrates of the Colony. Hawthorne is not afraid to use the word symbolize itself. The closing sentence of this chapter, speaking of the rose bush, says, "It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow."

b. Hester

Chapter II gives us living symbols of the idea of innate evil and alienation. When Hester Prynne first holds the child of adultery over her breast, her action suggests the superimposing of the living object over the scarlet letter--the two becoming interchangeable in the action, the sinful babe--the reality--imposed upon the correlative emblematic A. In describing Hester, Hawthorne adds that her suffering seemed to form a kind of halo about her head. Notice how the scarlet A had "the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself" (p. 41). Hawthorne places the scaffold where Hester is led *almost under the eaves of the church*, suggesting how stern a judge and punisher of transgressors is the Puritan church. It defines the limits of the expression of depravity by communal convention. Notice also that Hawthorne may suggest that Hester and her child are, in a sense, indictments of the society which indicts them, analogous to the Mary and the infant Jesus whom their society professes. The judges, the general, and the ministers of the town from their balcony look down upon the scaffold, a position which suggest how they *impose* laws. Chapter 5 gives a first picture of one way, Hester's way, of dealing with original alienation--the public wearing of signs of social error combined with the public acceptance of suffering imposed by society and the use of such suffering to overcome alienation and act the role imposed by love. Hester thinks to herself that "she would become the general symbol at which they might vivify and embody their images of woman's frailty, and sinful passion." She Wills to become a symbol to the whole community, a community which she cannot think of leaving to go back to England. Notice here too that the house to which she goes when she leaves the prison is not located in the center of the town but on the very outskirts of the community. She is a partial outcast for her sin. But, with her skill in needlework, she can create the richly decorated garments worn by the magistrates of the community, paying tribute to the demands of their law. As the stares of the townspeople at the scarlet A keep the sore fresh, so Hester's agony remains.

c. *Pearl*

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 are given over to Pearl, to the offspring of Hester's "sin." The chapters suggest the complexity of Hawthorne's understanding of sin both as socially defined wrong and as innate or "original" human alienation from other men. Pearl is perhaps one of the most tiresome little creatures in fiction, if we think of her as a realistically conceived character. However, she is passing successful allegory. The name *Pearl* is an ironic name derived from the Biblical "pearl of great price": the innocent jewel which suggests both the price and the guilt of Pearl's being--what Hester has paid for in agony--but also the innocent jewel which suggests the innocence which is part of Hester's sin and Pearl's life. Pearl and her mother are innocent in natural terms and guilty in social terms, innocent in reality and guilty in appearance. Or, perhaps, they are innocent in that they are naive and guilty in that they have felt the alienating sting. Pearl is dressed in red--the pearl of purity covered by the scarlet of sin; she is impulsive, illogical, undisciplined, all qualities which suggest her origin in an adultery; "An imp of evil, emblem and product of sin." She is the *demon offspring*, the child of nature, man in a state of natural depravity, naturally knowing Kierkegardian dread before her fellows. The opening of Chapter 7 makes the connection between Pearl's dress and the scarlet emblem on Hester's bosom--the child who cannot escape the guilt of an adulteress. In the Governor's house, in the face of community law, Pearl is something of a rascal. The magnification of the scarlet A reflected in the suit of armor and the appearance of Pearl as she is reflected in a distorted way suggest her symbolic significance. Again, Chapter 8 is filled with the suggestions of Pearl's sharing of her mother's sin--the red dress catching the eyes of Bellingham and Wilson. She avoids the love that Wilson would show her, a suggestion that she is a child of Nature rather than of the Puritan "God," a suggestion which is reinforced when Pearl denies being the child of a Heavenly Father and asserts that she was plucked from a (sexual) rose bush. When Bellingham is distraught with her wildness, Hester draws her to her and says: "She is my happiness--she is my torture, nonetheless. Pearl keeps me here in life! Pearl punished me too! See ye not, she is the scarlet letter, only capable of being loved and so endowed with a millionfold the power of retribution for my sin?" After Dimmesdale speaks in behalf of Hester's right to retain custody of the child, Pearl, uncharacteristically, shows affection toward him. Chapter 15 makes Pearl become a true imp with her destruction of the sea creatures and her throwing of pebbles at the beach-birds. She even decks herself with sea weed and ellgrass, reminders of her lawlessness, her independence of human society, and her "evil." Pearl symbolizes here the freedom which comes from breaking law. In general, she is a picture of the ambiguous guilty-innocent character of the sin which the Puritan community assigns to Hester and which Nature, lawless or ambiguously good and evil, encouraged in her. Pearl is Hawthorne's natural symbol of the Calvinist conception of "inherited sin" as it moves from generation to generation--sin as a propensity to rebel against community bonds, to be free--a propensity half creative and half destructive.

d. Hester again

Chapter 13 adds one important symbolic twist to Hester's allegory. The letter A has, because of Hester's good works and her ministration to the ill, lost some of its emblematic harshness for the Puritan community and for Hester, and become a figure for the good communion between man and man, which can arise from suffering: "Some thought the A stood for Able, so strong was Hester Prynne, with woman's strength." Suffering has changed the meaning of the symbol and changed the character of the love which the villagers display.

In Chapter 19, in the forest scene between Hester and Dimmesdale, Hawthorne raises his most profound and profoundly ambiguous question about Hester--whether the "anti-natural morality of the Puritans which forces the A upon her for following her natural instinct is in itself an evil morality or whether tha Nature which allows one to abandon the A and express oneself independently of the communal ideal and perhaps to its detriment is the evil. The opening of Chapter 21, "The New England Holiday," finds Hester in the market place, still of the same mind that she was in when she was in the forest, having made plans with Dimmesdale to escape by ship rom the Puritan community and also to escape the payment of further retribution. Hester refuses the surface freedom offered by escape to nature or to other societies to work her way back to communion with her fellows while retaining her inner freedom.

e. Chillingworth

At the opposite end of Hawthorne's moral spectrum from Hester is Chillingworth. Chillingworth's conscious pursuit of perfection and of the discovery of imperfection becoomes paradoxically a conscious, systematic commitment to the alienation which is Hawthorne's version of original sin, a commitment to exposing the secret failure of the human heart, here even more intense than that of the Custom-House Hawthorne. When Chillingworth makes his appearnace, Hawthorne says of him--"A writhing horror twisted itself across his features, like a snake swiftly gliding over them" Chillingworth is, from the first, a kind of Genesis serpent, the victim of original alienation and its propagator (Recall the imagery drawn from Eden's story in Young Goodman Brown. [Grade 10, "Sin and Loneliness"].) When, in Chapter V, the mistreated husband places his finger upon the scarlet letter, Hawthorne tells that it "forwith seemed to scorch Hester's breast, as if it had been red-hot." This metaphor suggests Chillingworth's capacity to heighten the suffering created by the sense of sin particularly when this sense is bound up with despair and not accompanied by the sense of possible regeneration; Chillingworth even speaks to Hester of her having "fallen into the pit." Hester compares Chillingworth to an Indian, "the Black Man."[1] Chapter 9 displays

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[1] Notice here that one has the symbolizing of the Puritan belief that much of nature is evil; that Satan is a part of nature. For the American Puritan, Satan, through using the Indians as his vehicles, inhabited the forest and threatened the community. When we first meet Chillingworth, he has just emerged from the forest in the company of Indians.

Chillingworth's surrender to the clinical artist's detachment and concern for a superhuman, diabolic perfection. Though the name leech was commonly used in England and early America, the word here is not merely a harmless designation for a doctor. The leech attaches itself to another animal and does not let loose until it has gorged itself with blood. When Hawthorne speaks of Chillingworth's association with Dimmesdale, he describes him as "attached" to Dimmesdale. Even the name Chillingworth is suggestive of the calculating quality of the man. There is something symbolic too about Chillingworth's going to the forest of evil to gather his herbs and other pharmaceutical agents. The "forest of evil" symbol appears prominently in Dante, in Spenser (12th grade "Christian Epic"), and in Young Goodman Brown (cf. 10th grade, "Sin and Alienation"). It is used, in Christian iconography, to describe the area from which man's first fall came--his wandering from a proper love. Hawthorne tells us that Dimmesdale enjoyed viewing the world through Chillingworth's "scientist's" eyes--a view which afforded him a "freer atmosphere." These eyes are loveless eyes. Chillingworth, prying into Dimmesdale's heart, is "Like a treasure-seeker in a dark cavern," "an old conjurer," with curious equipment in his room and a fire in his laboratory fed with an infernal fuel. In Chapter 10, Chillingworth has grown, out of the very heart of a criminal, a leaf like the leaf which he expects to find in Dimmesdale's heart--one which actually grows in his own moral sense. Here Hawthorne establishes with a final clarity the meaning of Dimmesdale's suffering from Chillingworth's inhuman probing, the probing doctor juxtaposed against the minister defensively sheltering his heart with his hand.

f. Dimmesdale

Between Hester and Chillingworth stands Dimmesdale, publically proclaiming the quest for perfection as defined by the Calvinistic-Mosaic law and announcing the doctrine of original depravity and elective innocence. He is, at the same time, alienated--separated by a real and profound knowledge that his own unconfessed sin keeps him from rejoining the community, and he is incapable of the humility which would go with wearing the scarlet A and doing the works of love. His Scarlet A is branded within him. His original alienation has become a way of life--a commitment to hold back the deepest recesses of his error from public inspection; every man thus becomes fearful to the man who preaches love. Hester's A is open. Her deepest error as understood by the community is publicized. She can do things for people. When Dimmesdale speaks to Hester in Chapter II, the babe lifts its arms to him--a symbol of recognition between child and father: the child, a "sinner" as original sin is defined in Puritan terms and the father, a sinner as original sin is defined by Hawthorne. The father can do nothing in response to his child.

Most of Dimmesdale's story concerns his effort to get rid of the Scarlet A without wearing it--an effort which makes him Chillingworth's subject of research and his prey. In Chapter 10, when Dimmesdale looks from the window, Pearl throws one of her burrs at him--a symbolic gesture which displays how, as Hester works out her expiation and Chillingworth works on Dimmesdale, the suffering which goes with sin will pass from mother to father. Chapter 12, "The Minister's Vigil," emphasized Dimmesdale's attempt to ease his sense of guilt by taking his position on the scaffold where Hester had had to exhibit her shame to the townspeople. Dimmesdale is endeavoring furtively--reticently--to make the kind of public expiation which will cure his inner hurt and pay his debt to society for his breaking its code, while he is advocating its code and value structure. Mistress Hibbins, outcast, looks out of her casement for a minute after she hears the Minister's shriek. Mr. Wilson, the respectable citizen, walks close by the scaffold on his way home from attending the dying Governor Winthrop, but he does not see. When Hester and Pearl appear with Dimmesdale on the scaffold, the scene centers on Pearl's question to Dimmesdale: "But wilt thou promise to take my hand, and mother's tomorrow noontide?" Dimmesdale cannot face public confession of his sin. Suddenly a meteor going through the sky lights the whole scene, as if the eye of God is suddenly directed to the minister and the partner of his sin with the object of their sin standing between them, a kind of physical link, as if all of nature confessed its "adultery," its fallen condition. It is Dimmesdale who believes he sees in the sky a meteor shaped like an enormous Scarlet A. What he sees, of course, is the symbol of his own soul and of his need of confession. In the shadows at the base of the scaffold is a Satanic Chillingworth, the agent who wishes to find out the guilty for himself, for his own satisfaction, but who does not wish to allow for guilt's public expiation. Dimmesdale finally wishes to escape his responsibility to himself, to Hester, to society for his doubleness. During the excitement of the forest scene, he agrees to Hester's plan of escape. His experiences, after leaving Hester, force him back into the Puritan path--he has sinned and he must make retribution.

The central scene for Dimmesdale comes in the forest meeting with Hester. The forest of chapter 16-19 may have a double significance, standing both for moral error--it is the place where Hester and Dimmesdale go astray--and for moral innocence--it is the place where Pearl becomes a child of nature in Rousseau's sense. Pearl here is not only both innocent child and symbol of sin; she is, at the same time, the retribution which goes with sin in her insistence on Hester's replacing the scarlet letter which she has removed and temporarily cast aside. If Hester's casting of the letter aside is a symbol of her romantic revolt from the Puritan community and its religion and her replacing it, a symbol of her compliance with, but not acceptance of, Puritan law, then she becomes in this scene a normative figure by which Dimmesdale is judged. He has surrendered his inner integrity while pretending to a compliance with Puritan law. This is actually a rejection of Puritan law and of the human community's claim on him. Throughout these chapters Hester embodies a kind of romantic individualism--the spirit of Thoreau and Whitman; Dimmesdale embodies the external subservience to the claims of Calvinistic theology at its hardest and the complete rejection of all that is inward and possibly meaningful in that communal doctrine. It is curious that Hawthorne calls Chapter 18 "A Flood of Sunshine." He has used darkness throughout the novel to symbolize evil and suffering. It is as if he is now saying that the light which has broken in upon Hester, the natural gladness which has possessed her, is evil from the perspective of communal demands, that the same light, this same motive, inspires Dimmesdale's desire to speak blasphemies as he re-enters the Puritan community:

> Am I mad? or am I given over utterly to the fiend? . . . Did I make a contract with him in the forest, and sign it with my blood? And now does he summon me to its fulfillment, by suggesting the performance of every wickedness which my foul imagination can conceive?

Even Mistress Hibbins sees, in Dimmesdale's face, evidence that he has been in the forest--that he has been momentarily tempted to abandon the morality of the Puritan community and join forces with Nature.

In Chapter 22, "The Procession" (the passage where Dimmesdale seems completely rapt and where Hester looks to him for a sign of recognition and finds none), Hawthorne appears to suggest that Hester and Dimmesdale now more than every occupy two different worlds--the one a world where sin has been confessed and a partial retribution made, the other a world where the public admission of sin has been withheld and the suffering grown almost unbearable. Mistress Hibbins and the townspeople, stimulated by the curiosity of the newcomers about Hester's scarlet letter, seem to revive their torment of her, and their reaction makes Dimmesdale, holiest of men and spokesman for society's ethic, the more culpable. He only "damns" himself the more in the terms provided by Hawthorne while he preaches the inspired election sermon which damns the presumtuous and non-elect. Finally, Dimmesdale's redemption comes (Chapter 23) at the bottom of the steps to the scaffold; Chillingworth tries to stop him, but he exclaims: "Ha, tempter! Thou art too late! Thy power is not what it was. With God's help I shall escape thee now!" In this speech, Dimmesdale becomes the moral equivalent of Hester, prepared to make astonished folk gathered around the foot of the scaffold to hear his confession. When Dimmesdale has finished and is dying, Hester asks: "Shall we not meet again? Shall we not spend our immortal life together? Surely, surely we have ransomed one another, with all this woe!" Hawthorne does not sentimentalize by making Dimmesdale into a Hester in hope as well as in confession and love; he remains the Puritan spokesman for "law" to the last when he speaks of eternal hope: "The law we broke--the sin here so awfully revealed--let these alone be in thy thoughts! I fear! I fear! It may be that when we forgot God-- when we violated our reverence each for the other's soul--it was thence-forth vain to hope that we could meet hereafter, in a everlasting and pure reunion." Much of the heart of Calvinism is contained in these speeches. Dimmesdale expires saying: "Praised be His name. His will be done! Farewell." Hester, a romantic to the last, remains unconvinced, her own master within as she has been the servant of the community in all things external, as she has paid fully for her alienation from community mores.

In his final chapter Hawthorne uses one symbol stated ambiguously. This is the scarlet A which it was reported was seen on the bare flesh of Dimmesdale's breast when he made his confession. The author suggests three possible explanations for its being there: that Dimmesdale branded himself on the day when Hester first appeared wearing her scarlet letter; that Chillingworth had caused it to appear through the agency of magic and poisonous drugs; that it was the sign of a remorse in Dimmesdale's heart which had relentlessly from the day of his sin gnawed within. Though the symbol is ambiguous, its meaning is clear. The fading and death of Chillingworth soon after Dimmesdale's confession suggest that his kind of cold love of perfection and cold desire to expose imperfection, his satanic rejection of human fallibility and the claims of the social, are outwitted at the final moment. The public penitence of Hester and her public service and the desperate penitence of Dimmesdale have opened the way to a kind of grace which goes beyond suffering and reaches through mere pride in perfection.

V. Billy Budd

Melville's Billy Budd is also an allegory about the implication of "the fall of man" but it is a more difficult and complex allegory, susceptible to radically variant interpretations.

Melville wrote Billy Budd, Foretopman during the last two and a half years before his death in 1891. At that time he was unknown as a writer, and his greatest work, Moby Dick, which had been a monumental failure with the public, was forty years in the past. Melville's reputation had then been in eclipse for almost thirty-five years, and it was to remain so for almost another thirty-five years, until his collected works were published in London in 1924. In that edition, Billy Budd appeared in print for the first time in a somewhat confused edition. Since then his work has received a great deal of critical attention, as complex and confusing as its text. Billy Budd is an ideal work for asking students to test their interpretive powers and to put two-and-two together. One may describe two basic positions which have been taken concerning the work which relate it to the Calvinistic ethic.

The first position is the "testament of acceptance" position. When Billy Budd came to light thirty-three years after Melville's death, it naturally stirred up a good deal of excitement in literary circles and served to initiate a revived interest in and a re-appraisal of his other works which had suffered seventy years of neglect. From the beginning, the book was favorably received by reviewers, who rejoiced to see in it a controlled, dramatic, and affirmative treatment of the problem of evil; the first critics felt, perhaps foolishly, that they did not find the wildness, despair, and nihilistic qualities so strongly in control as in some of the earlier books, including Moby Dick. John Middleton Murry said in the Times Literary Supplement for July 10, 1924: ". . . Melville is telling the story of the inevitable and utter disaster of the good and trying to convey to us that this must be so and ought to be so . . . He is trying, as it were with his final breath, to reveal the knowledge that has been haunting him--that these things must be so and not otherwise." Writing two years later, John Freeman emphasized that, in Billy Budd, exaltation of spirit redeems the hanging scene from horror and that innocence is vindicated more conspicuously in death than it could be in life: ". . . In his last days /Melville/ re-enters an Eden-like sweetness and serenity . . . uttered his everlasting yea, and died before a soul had been allowed to hear him *** Billy Budd ends in a brightness of escape such as the apostle saw when he exclaimed, 'Death, where is thy sting!'" In 1929 Lewis Mumford wrote that Billy Budd is the story of three men in the British Navy; it is also the story of the world, the spirit, and the devil . . . The meaning is so obvious that one shrinks from underlining it. Good and evil exist in the nature of things, each forever itself, each doomed to war with the other. In the working out of human institutions, evil has a place as well as the good: e.g., Vere is contemptuous of Claggart, but cannot do without him: he loves Budd as a son and must condemn him to the noose. These are the fundamental ambiguities of life; so long as evil exists, the agents that intercept it will also be evil, whilst we accept the world' conditions . . . Melville had been harried by these paradoxes in Pierre. At last he was reconciled. He accepted the situation as a tragic necessity; and to meet that tragedy bravely was to find peace, the ultimate peace of resignation . . ."

Before we examine the more "pessimistic" later readings of Billy Budd, let us look at two more of the "optimistic" readings, one proposed by Watson and one proposed recently by Lee T. Lemon: "As Melville's theme is larger than a personal conflict, so his setting gathers all the grim struggles of the world into the battleship, Indomitable; war and threatened mutiny are the condition of existence in this setting. Injustice and inhumanity are rampant in such a setting, even though Captain Vere, the commander of the ship, is the man who obeys the law and who, at the same time, understands the truth of the spirit. Captain Vere also has the extraordinary quality of being able to accept, but with full consciousness and understanding of the responsibility of his position. He is fully aware of the unnaturalness of the law (The Mutiny Act) which he is pledged to accept and enforce. Under that law he is called upon to condemn to shameful death a man whom he feels to be innocent, but he manfully takes full responsibility upon himself in such a way as to assume a great share of the bitterness . . . The spiritual understanding between Captain Vere and Billy Budd has its basis and its strength in the innate goodness that they share and that they recognize in each other. Through this spiritual unity the man who imposes the sentence of death under the law is enabled to redeem the innocent victim from the bitterness of his death. Billy and Vere both accept the evil of the world and understand its inevitability--natural innocents that they are." Melville so interpreted is read a little like the Emerson of "Compensation." The positions of those who read Billy Budd as a testament of acceptance vary somewhat, but the general viewpoint is always the same: Melville had mellowed; he was resigned, as Freeman says, to the recognition of the necessity of certain apparent evils in the world and could even see them as good. In F.O. Matthiessen's words, "He had come to respect necessity. . . Melville could now face incongruity; he could accept the existence of both good and evil."

Perhaps the most persuasive case for a "testament of acceptance" reading is that by Mr. Lee T. Lemon. It supports a reading which makes Melville's story wear a thematic design very like that which the foregoing essay attributed to the *Scarlet Letter*:[1]

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[1] "Billy Budd: The Plot Abainst the Story," an article by Lee T. Lemon which appeared in the *Journal of Studies of Short Fiction*, Vol. II, no. 1, Fall of 1964, pp. 32-43

[2] Herman Melville, *Billy Budd: Sailor* (An Inside Narrative), Harrison Hayford and Merton M. Sealts, Jr. eds. (Chicago, 1962). All references are to this text, the first definitive edition of Billy Budd.

[1] I would include the temptation scene as part of the plot rather than the story because it is inconsequential; Claggart does not refer to it when he accuses Billy and, on the level of the story, it results in no further action.

[5] The difficulty here might result from the unfinished state of the manuscript of *Billy Budd*.

There has been some dissent from the "acceptance" interpretations. In 1950, Joseph Scheffman reviewed previous "acceptance" interpretations and put forth the suggestion which he credited to Gay Wilson Allen . . . "That Billy Budd might best be interpreted as a work of irong." Since 1950, the ironical interpretation has gained the support of a number of critics, particularly Lawrance Thompson, Richard Stavig, and Richard Chase. The reader who finds that Billy Budd is basically ironical finds in it a meaning quite different from that found by the earlier reader who regarded Billy's final sentiments as normative. There is, in fact, a reversal of meaning; rather than a testament of acceptance, Billy Budd becomes a "testament of resistance or of doubt."

Once the reader suspects that what he is reading may have ironical implications, the irony is not hard to find. The problem is to know when the irony is there and when one is putting it there. Melville is explicit about his irony on more than one occasion. For example, on page 230 he points out that it is ironical that Claggart was first moved against Billy because of his personal beauty, an irony that the young sailors missed and that Melville does not want the reader to miss.

Before we explore the possibility of broader irony in the work, it may be well to mark out where the "testament of acceptance" and the "testament of rejection" readers of Melville agree. There is general agreement among all readers as to the character and significance of Billy Budd and John Claggart. Melville is quite explicit about his desire to have them taken as types of good and evil, innocence and experience. Billy's speech defect, his human flaw, is likened to the young lady's birthmark in Hawthorne's story (p. 208); and Melville says outright that it is the mark of evil, perhaps a symbol of original sin in Billy; Billy, both from the verbal suggestions in the text and from the actions which he performs, is a kind of emblematic figure, perhaps an emblem of Man-in-general or Man as conceived by Calvinistic theology. He is like Adam or like Christ (as Mr. Lemon's essay suggests) in that he is marked and yet innocent. If he is man as conceived by Calvin and the Puritans, he is only so insofar as the logic of his story parallels the logic of mankind's role in the Calvinistic "economy of fall and redemption." He appears to all critics to be, in some sense, undeserving of his death and incapable of controlling the necessity which produces his own violent action. Billy is innocence marked but still innocence—innocence which falls from the pressure of necessity's action.

Almost all critics agree about Claggart. Claggart is the envious serpent, sick with an envy which grows into an insatiable antipathy because Billy's nature "had in its simplicity never willed malice, or experienced the reactionary bite of that serpent" (Cf. Milton's Satan outside Eden in Paradise Lost, Book IV). He is treated as a kind of Satan-figure (the teacher who is familiar with the symbolism and iconology of Paradise Lost will find much of it echoed in Billy Budd). At the climax this serpent of malice stings Billy where he is vulnerable; the reaction is so violent as to destroy the source of the sting. Again, one thinks of Biblical passages about heels and heads. Almost all critics agree that a significant thing about Claggart is that he exists on Vere's boat; he does not exist on the "Rights-of-Man". Indeed, on the "Rights-of-Man," evil is a poke by Red Whiskers, a blow from Billy and a spontaneous reconciliation. However, critics do not agree as to what is the significance of the contrast between Claggart and Red Whiskers, the "Indomitable" and the "Rights-of-Man." And some critics would say that the society of the "Rights-of-Man"is a social society—a good deal more so than that of the "Indomitable."

Around the third figure, Captain Vere, the greatest disagreement has arisen; around him the ironists see most irony collected. Vere is described as apparently the best type of British naval officer; however, in his brief characterization, each virtue is immediately qualified or nullified by a counter statement: Vere is "mindful of the welfare of his men, but never tolerated an infraction of discipline . . . intrepid to the verge of temerity, though never injudiciously so." He is further characterized through his reading (p. 216), as reading voraciously either in a constantly replenished library which is so carefully selected that it contains only those ideas he already holds as convictions or with such closed and narrow mind as to preclude his having new ideas. In all of his reading he finds only "confirmation of his own more reserved thoughts." His thoughts are "reserved", not spoken, or shared. He is so ill equipped for informal social intercourse that he cannot communicate with other men of his own profession (p. 217), and any budding conversation grinds to a halt under his only conversational coin, a few historical allusions meaningless to the other party. Melville says that the Captain cannot avoid this rudeness, for "considerateness in such matters is not easy in natures constituted like Captain Vere's. Their honesty prescribes to them a directness, sometimes far reaching like that of a migratory fowl that in its flight never heeds when it crosses a frontier." The ironist may suggest that a man whose "honesty" is wholly lacking in considerateness and whose vision is so blind that he does not know when he has crossed a frontier is an odd choice for the just "judge." To place him in judgment on Billy Budd seems a bit unusual unless something other than a moral decision is to be the outcome. Students should be encouraged to go over the sentences describing Vere very carefully—to discuss their implications.

The ironists question Vere's military greatness, his capacities as captain and leader as well as his capacities as judge. In the process of portraying Vere, Melville goes to the trouble of devoting several pages to Nelson, pointing out with approval that Nelson challenged death by his brilliant attire when leading his men in a fight, that Nelson died a soldier's death (Vere dies drugged and ashore). Nelson fought in direct contact with the enemy while Vere, in the encounter described in *Billy Budd*, did not have the opportunity to catch up with the opposing ship. Vere is frequently used for diplomatic missions, not a great captain's usual service; he is said to be a man of "sturdy qualities but without brilliant ones." Nelson, on the other hand, is asked to take command of a ship recently involved in the Great Mutiny, "not indeed to terrorize the crew into base subjection, but to win them, by force of his mere presence back to . . . allegiance." Vere's *presence* wins no one to anything. Vere, in a not wholly different situation from Nelson's hangs Billy Budd, "thinking perhaps that under existing circumstances the consequence of violating discipline should be made to speak for itself." Again, the complications of these comparisons between Vere and Nelson should be discussed in class. Nelson may, in part, suggest the kind of captain which Melville might have created to be the captain of the "Indomitable" had he wished to write such an anti-Jacobin defense of the natural man's need for authority as Mr. Lemon describes. Nelson's "authority" derives both from his coercive power over his men and his personal presence. Vere's derives only from his power. That Melville chooses an authoritarian captain who is supported by few "natural" loyalties suggests that perhaps he did not wish to create the most favorable possible fictional figure for necessary (or *ancien regime*) authority.

Vere may not come off as well in the main action as Mr. Lemon's argument suggests. Claggart accuses Billy of projected mutiny; Vere decides to confront the two men with each other in his cabin. There, Billy, infuriated by the charges, confused and frustrated by his stammer, strikes Claggart dead. Apparently Vere's purpose in bringing them together is to "find out the truth." But in endeavoring to find out the truth he does not choose the method normally chosen by "natural" *or* "social" societies--the piecing together of evidence to ascertain the authority of the witness and so forth. He does not ask for Claggart's confirming evidence "out of fear of the matter's at once getting abroad, which might undesirably affect the ship's company." Why doesn't Vere send for confirming evidence and keep the matter a matter between Claggart and himself? The crew need not know. That a confrontation of Billy on the basis of false witness might undersirably affect the company, that it would not be calculated to inspire the loyalty or enthusiasm which Nelson inspires, does not occur to Vere; that an obvious miscarriage of justice might deaden morale and inspire mutiny does not deter him. He is not Nelson. Indeed, Vere's distance from the ordinary sense of evidence, presentation of charges, and public procedure may in part account for his fear of "undesirable effects on the company." Even in war and under laws such as the Mutiny Act, responsible authority knows how to handle false charges so as to preserve public trust; otherwise, the basis of authority crumbles. Lincoln's America-at-war without *Habeas Corpus* and other conventional legal restraints on arbitrary arrest is different from Stalin's Russia without the same constraints.

How does Vere expect the interview to produce the truth? Claggart can only accuse, and Billy can only deny. If he hopes to be able to infer the truth from behavior and reaction, he has had opportunity to do so without the confrontation. He apparently does infer the truth from behavior and reaction for he feels convinced, without a word having been spoken, that Billy is innocent. But he does not act on that conviction, either in arranging the confrontation or later. Why not the rack for Claggart if procedure is to be ignored? Social society does not require that one trap the passionate into antisocial behavior to discover and destroy their passion. Vere's decision to arrange the confrontation between the serpent and the innocent is apparently based on the single element of calculating prudence, or is it based on "necessity"? The trial raises the same problems as does the confrontation. When Claggart is dead, Vere looks on and cries, "Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang." Vere must have divine perception, indeed, to see so quickly to the heart of so complex a situation and know what God has done. The serpent has been overthrown and his overthrower must hang? Vere calls a court-martial to try Billy for murder under the mutiny law; one may question whether the Mutiny Law required trials for ship accidents, accidental deaths, or even accidental homicide. Vere reserves "to himself . . . the right of maintaining a supervision of it, or formally or informally interposing at need." He finds it necessary to supervise and to interpose in order to get a court specially selected for the purpose to vote the death penalty. When he finds his court hesitant, "from the clashing of military duty with moral scruple," as he puts it, he urges them to strive against scruples, admitting that it goes against nature to adjudge to shameful death a fellow-creature, innocent before God, and "whom we feel to be so." Apparently Vere's sense of duty is not shared by his closest fellow officers. But "do these buttons that we wear attest that our allegiance is to Nature? No, to the King." The officer of marines points out that Budd "proposed neither mutiny or homicide." Vere agrees with him, saying that Billy will be acquitted in heaven. But there can be no acquittal now: "War looks but to the frontage, the appearance. And the Mutiny Act, War's child, takes after the father. Budd's intent is nothing to the purpose." The only man who has seen Billy's "appearance" is Vere, and he, in the name of the appearance, War, and the King, can argue for an appearance which no one can question; he can argue for a wartime expediency which goes beyond Nelson's necessity, and a relationship between Kings' law and natural law which the English constitution never recognized.

No one questions Vere's argument for a good reason. No one suggests that the King's law should be in harmony with nature's law, or that, if there is disagreement between, the allegiance must be to the higher and more universal law of nature. No one asks Vere to support his thesis. The reason that the men do not question Vere's arguments is that they do not understand them; as Melville says, "they were without the faculty . . . hardly had the inclination to gainsay one whom they felt to be an earnest man, one no less their superior in mind than in naval rank." Still they are not persuaded.

Vere gives them one argument they can understand. They cannot acquit, and they dare not soften the sentence lest the crew get to thinking they hesitate through fear and, in that show of weakness, find an occasion to mutiny. After all of the finely spun thought, the issue turns on fear. When the subtle rational arguments fail, Vere does not call on more of the jurist's rational arguments but on an emotional appeal. The core of his argument before the court is that it must bow to legal necessity: "For that law and the rigor of it," he says, "we are not responsible. Our vowed responsibility is in this: That however pitilessly that law may operate, we nevertheless adhere to it and administer it." Vere's logic fails to suggest that a court in any culture must interpret or apply law, a logical failure which would appear to be deliberate and based on the fact that Vere has already done the necessary interpreting for the court. Vere's logic also means that a citizen in time of peril cannot take responsibility for opposing an unjust law but must enforce it mechanically (and with a prejudgment).

Vere is the only witness at the court-martial. He chooses to testify from the ship's weather side, forcing the court to sit below him, both literally and metaphorically, on the lee side. When preparing to persuade the court to his opinion, he paces the cabin, "in returning ascent to windward, climbing the slant deck in the ship's lee roll; without knowing it symbolizing thus in his action a mind resolute to surmount difficulties even if against strong primitive instincts." Melville has suggested repeatedly throughout the novel that the instincts of the untutored barbarian are sounder than the civilized intellect; he cannot easily have a moral Vere weave a complex intellectual argument to support a moral position; but he can easily have a sophistic logical Vere weave such an argument to support an immoral sense of necessity, particularly if he displays that same Vere as driving his point home with fear, one of the emotions in man which 19th century people regarded as an outcome of the rise of corrupting civilization. The Vere who says after Billy's saintly death and the crew's curious "God bless Captain Vere" that man is a denizen of the forest who must be controlled by form and routine may not be the normative Vere whom Lemon proposes. Billy is not a beast. When the ship's crew echoes Billy's "God bless Captain Vere," they may be remarking the extraordinary character of Billy's dying words, echoing Billy, and displaying their love of Billy. They speak sympathetically with Billy alone in their hearts. They may not be referring to Vere's worthiness to be blessed: "Without volition as it were, as if indeed the ship's populace were the vehicles of some vocal current electric, with one voice, from alow and aloft came a resonant sympathetic echo--'God bless Captain Vere!' And yet at that instant Billy alone must have been in their hearts, even as he was in their eyes." Vere's whole handling of ship law and ship trial needs to be very carefully discussed.

Another clue to Vere may come after Billy has been hanged. The men are put to work at various tasks; they are swept into the routine as fast as possible:

> "With mankind" he would say, "forms, measured forms are everything; and that is the import couched in the story of Orpheus with his lyre spellbinding the wild denizens of the woods."

Stripped of its verbiage, Vere here says that men in his regime must not think for themselves, that form and habit must control them as if they were animals. Earlier Vere had thought of his men as chattel, of Billy as "A King's bargain, that is to say, for His Britannic Majesty's navy a capital investment at a small outlay or none at all." If Billy is not a beast, he is not a slave either. That is, Vere's vision of one man is clearly limited.

We cannot know about the accuracy of his vision of the rest of the crew save by looking at other crews--the "Rights-of-Man." That crew does not need Orpheus' lyre.

If Claggart has the perverted intelligence of the serpent, and Billy Budd is, as Lemon suggested above, pure innocence, acting and judging on instinct or intuition, Vere is impassive intelligence, weaving webs by which it can justify or rationalize. Vere does not act from wise intelligence but from the kind of intelligence which frames complex legal and theological argument, acts from fear, and makes its final appeal to brute force. Billy's ballad composed by the same men who say "God bless Captain Vere" as Billy dies, when he is to be sacrificed, does not bless captain Vere but speaks curiously and compassionately of the sentiments uniting Billy and the crew. Vere is not blessed in that ballad. And the newspaper account which defends the hanging lies.

It would be ironic indeed to dedicate Billy Budd to Jack Chase if the novel were devoted to a defense of submission. The treatment of Jack Chase on the United States makes Melville cry out eloquently in White Jacket against impressment, flogging, and the captain's tyranny. Chase had intervened to save Melville from a flogging, just such a flogging as Billy Budd witnessed on the Indomitable the second day after his impressment. Chase was "a stickler for the "Rights-of-Man" and the liberties of the world."

The preface, which some recent critics have excised for textual reasons, also may help to make clear the direction of the book. Whether the preface belongs to the book or not, it is Melville's last remark about the French Revolution and may tell one what the fable of his story says about the French revolution, the "Rights-of-Man," and the Mutiny law. Melville speaks of the French Revolution as an expression of "the Spirit of that Age which involved the rectification of the Old World's hereditary wrongs." Despite excesses, "the outcome [of the French Revolution] was political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans," and, he observes, the Great Mutiny gave the first prompting to reforms in the British navy; tyranny can be and should be resisted. That all men have defects does not mean that institutions designed to control evil should be allowed to destroy the good without resistance. Remember that Billy's first ship is the "Rights-of-Man"--the battle cry of the Revolution which Melville praised.

The ironic view is sometimes extended so that Billy Budd is seen as a comment upon matters social and religious in 18th and 19th Century Europe and America.

First, the social. Billy is impressed from the"Rights of Man," a ship named after the battle cry of the American and French Revolutions. He is taken by a British Captain Vere who is subservient to the ancien regime and tried by law which is king's law--whose sole aim is to prevent revolution--and not by natural law--the law which governs men to allow them to cultivate the best in their nature. Natural law was the foundation upon which the French and American revolutionaries of the late 18th Century rested their case. The year in which the story begins, when Billy (Mankind?) is taken from the "Rights-of-Man," is the year in which the French Revolution was turning "reactionary" as Napoleon took over the Republic and began to move toward his 1799 coup d'etat; by 1797, America had lost some of its revolutionary enthusiasm and would, for a decade and more, play footsy with

Imperial France. England in 1797 was in the hands of a conservative regime and a King soon to be, in Shelley's phrase, "old, mad, blind, despised and dying." To say that Billy's movement from the "Rights-of-Man" to the "Indomitable" is an allegory for what demagogues, "conservatives," and admirers of the old regime did to the revolutions of the 1770's and 1780's is probably to make allegory out of a general, rather vague overtone. The connotation which France and England, the French "Rights-of-Man" and British "Beautiful Power"[1] or "Indomitability" carried to American audiences in the 1880's should not be ignored. Americans still loved the phrase "the rights of man"; they remembered France's support for the American revolution and her own similar revolution of 1789. They still distrusted British power and felt contempt for British impressment tactics before and during the War of 1812. One cannot argue that Billy wants to be impressed from the "Rights;" Melville reminds one that even Vere does not know whether Billy's actions or being impressed are to be taken ironically or at face value.

Billy's impressment by the King's ship may be said to suggest what happens wherever inertia and reaction set in after a revolution, wherever the "rights of man" and natural law are forgotten--whether in the 1790's or the 1850's or the 1890's. Reaction is like what happens to Billy when he is impressed from the "Rights-of-Man," trapped into guiltiness, and tried and destroyed by a necessity which looks only to the preservation of order and the old top dog. That Captain Vere's boat is destroyed by the Athee suggests that Vere's enemies are the Jacobins--the revolutionaries, the 18th and 19th Century "freers"; he is the incarnation of tradition, the ancien regime, king's law, king's worship, etc. This does not mean that he is evil, in an active, energetic way; he is the frigid, self-persuaded, impassive, almost generous tool of a hideous conception of social necessity. Vere's commitment to Melville's "necessity" and to "forms, measures, forms," in such a context, suggests that the awareness of evil in man, even of innate evil, is not a justification for the perpetuation of institutionalized injustice as an agency for "keeping man from his own anarchy." This latter view is a view which Hawthorne sometimes came close to emblemizing and which Mr. Lemon attributes to Melville.

It should be remembered that in the late 18th and early 19th Centuries the forces which opposed monarchy, and the ancien regime, the old aristocracy and the land-holding system--the tax system, educational system, and power structure which went with these--were also frequently the forces which opposed the established church--the established Roman, Lutheran, or Calvinist churches on the Continent and the Anglican Church in England. These forces were led by men who opposed conventional dogmatic religion by constructing their own religious systems--as did Shelley and Blake and many of the "founding fathers," or by men who were actively anti-Christian and opposed, more or less, to all theistic worship--Tom Paine, etc. This association between political liberalism and theological liberalism continued in America throughout the 19th Century and continues in some parts of Europe to this day (cf. 11th Grade "Individualism and Nature"). Vere's ship looks a little like the old regime in politics; it also looks a little like the old regime in religion--or at least like what this "regime" was represented by its opponents as being. That Billy Budd should have this double level--if it does--should not be surprising, for both the defender and the opponent of the ancien regime saw the old regime's system of governance as in some sense modeled after the goverance of God.

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[1] Bellipotent; one of Melville's names for the "Indomitable."

The idea of a "necessity" which, in some sense, governs--or is identical with--the hand of God was and is central in some conservative forms of Augustinian-Catholic, Calvinistic, and Lutheran Christianity, and was, of course, terribly important in Puritan New England. This idea of "necessity" is popularly associated with predestinarian doctrine. The predestinarians emphasized the idea that God is all-powerful and omniscient, that He knows all future things; knowing all future things, He also, in some sense, foreordains these, brings them into being. Thus, Adam's fall is foreknown by God--though the predestinarian did not generally wish to say that it was caused by Him--and man's regeneration was foreknown by God, foreordained, and caused by Him in the general redemptive act of Christ. The idea that what God foreknows, he also foreordains and causes was extended to the question of the salvation of individuals. God foreknew, foreordained and caused certain "willfull" sinners to be elect, to receive an irresistable grace, and to receive a salvation which they could not lose. Others were foreordained to damnation. But the God who so foreordained the Fall, the crucifixion, and the damnation of most of the human race was conceived of as a God of love. Salvation was, in non-Covenant New England Calvinist theology, a wholly unmerited favor granted by a "foreseeing and causing God," independent of the merit of the believer. The predestinarian wished to attribute the causation of all "redemptive" actions--Christ's general redemptive act and the individual election of believers--to God. Man's evil actions, however, were not attributed to God but to man's froward and rebellious will.

The predestinarian view was not universally popular. It could easily be parodied by agnostics. For instance, the antagonists of the view could suggest that if God caused or foreordained what He foreknew, then He must have foreknown and foreordained man's evil since he surely also foreknew it. The Calvinistic God, by an extension of Calvin's logic, could be seen as the author of evil, of Adam's fall, every man's subsequent sin, Christ's innocent suffering, and every other man's subsequent suffering and damnation. Such a God, by the "necessity" imposed by his foreknowledge, sees what is to come, causes what he sees, and, so bound by his own nature, becomes the author of endless evil.

The "anti-Christian" antagonists (Ingersoll, Mark Twain, and so forth) said that the predestinarian God, as represented above, is an essentially accurate representation of the Puritan God and perhaps of the God of the Old and New Testaments. Such a God, so omniscient and omnipotent as to be impotent, could, they said, only be regarded as the victim of the necessity created by his sight. And such a God could, they thought, be dismissed as an object of belief.

Billy Budd may, in part, be a parody and fable picture of the logic of doctrines favored by some "conservative" Christians in sections of Europe and by Calvinistic Puritans in America. Billy is compared to Adam--innocence personified but innocence marked like Hester with a liability. Claggart is the "serpent" but a serpent who has his opportunity and his power at the acquiescence of a Captain Vere who does not seek to stop him from tempting Billy. Indeed, Vere, like the ruler of Eden of Job's ruler, sets up the situation. Governed by his own "necessity," he forces Billy to come on his ship; that Billy does not resist is part of Billy's innocence, not of the excellence of Vere's boat. He half willfully brings Billy into a situation where his liability betrays him, he tries Billy for a crime which he, Vere, has more or less "caused". . or which he has allowed the necessity of his "war" and his own kind of vision to cause. In the trial he sets up the rules for the judgment upon Billy, the procedure which is to judge him, and finally controls a judgment which issues from fear--again, he does this as the tool of the "necessity" which both controls him and keeps him in power. As the Calvinist Puritan God separates man from himself in time and for eternity for the stammering illusion of free choice which He has "given" to him (as the detractor from Puritan theology argued), so Vere tries an "innocent man" for his own (Vere's) fault--for the impotence imposed by the necessity in which he is bound.

Melville's fable can be seen as a retelling of the Puritan theological story as a nightmare. Other details which are not central in the main plot line come into this argument. Critics are fond of pointing out parallels between Billy's "bitter biscuit and last parting cup" and Christ's last supper, between Billy's hanging and Christ's crucifixion--between Billy's "God bless Captain Vere" and Christ's guileless words from the cross. The critics also note that Vere is killed by the *Athee* (atheism), a boat which in this view symbolizes the obliteration of the idea of God and whatever tyranny goes with the "Vere" conception of Him; Vere identifies his purposes with God's, with those of a king who rules by divine right, and with "necessity." Richard Stavig has discovered that the model for Vere, a Captain MacKenzie (whose unjust trial and execution of a man named Sommers led to the so-called "Sommers Mutiny") justified his actions by identifying himself with God and asserting that God approved the hanging of Sommers. Melville could find, in the kernel incident which he developed into *Billy Budd*, justifications for developing it into a fable concerning the logical and moral flaws in the idea of a "necessary predestinarian cursing" of mankind after Adam and the conception of God which goes with the conception of a necessary curse; he could find basis in the kernel incident for making it into a fable suggesting that the whole 19th Century conception of God--perhaps the whole idea of God--was a power for misery and even evil. It should be observed that, in this view, Vere *is a compassionate man* in the same way that the Christian God is a compassionate God in the predestinarian view. What is mocked is not "God" or "Vere" but the *logic of predestinarian religion*: its picture of necessity, of the divine power and subservience, and of the economy of redemption.

This version of the meaning of *Billy Budd* should be examined as *a* possible meaning; the Biblical-theological allusions and parallels in the work should be watched fairly carefully. Students will want to make the story into a lesson supporting their own form of conventional piety. They should be encouraged to read the book thoughtfully before they plunk for such a reading: they should be encouraged to see that work may "mean" what they do not want it to mean. On the other hand, *Billy Budd* should not be used as a weapon to harass students whose religious views may be touched by one or another reading of its fable.

VI. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

A. Genre

Huckleberry Finn is obviously patterned after the picaresque novel popular in western Europe from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Before the teacher teaches this book, she should read the eighth grade unit on the "Journey Novel Hero" in order to be clear how the picaresque fictional mode commonly communicated meaning. The picaresque novel is a chronical, usually told from a limited point of view, of the adventures of a person of low degree and something of a rascal, who lives by his wits. Because it merely presents a series of thrilling incidents, it is episodic and lacks formal plot structure. Its mode is usually more exemplary than allegorical. The central character, through the nature of his various pranks and predicaments, and by virtue of his associations with people of all kinds, affords the author an opportunity for social satire. The picaro, or adventurer is typically carefree and footloose and immoral; he avoids actual crime but narrowly skirts disaster as he bounces from one escapade to another.[1]

Huckleberry Finn does not have a plot, in the traditional sense. It gives the surface impression of being a haphazard arrangement of aimless adventures. The absence of a cause-and-result relationship between the separate adventures, however, does not rule out a unity, and the aimlessness is only on the surface. Each adventure is dramatically prepared for; each is a step in a pattern of dramatic intensification, for each has Huck more deeply involved in society than did the preceding one; and each plays a variation on the theme of social involvement.

B. Evil in the Ante-Bellum South

Huck is in the deepest sense an outcast. Although Tom is an orphan, he at least has relatives who accept him conventionally and adopt him. As Huck says of Tom, "Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters." But Huck has no "respectability" or "character" to lose. He has only the drunkard Pap, himself an outcast, for a family.

Huck certainly belongs more to the river than to the society along its banks. But he is in no way a Rousseauistic child of nature. His descent from Pap removes him from the garden of innocence; like Billy, he has a "stutter" or, like Hester, a liability. But if this implies his connection with violence and evil, it also keeps him in communication with the deeper human forces. Huck's sympathy is immediate and genuine, but never sentimental; with it goes the assumption that his fellowmen are likely to be dangerous and even wicked. Huck knows the smallness of human nature and how to make use of it as, for example, when he saves Jim from the slave-hunters by implying there is smallpox aboard the raft.

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[1] For "western" material which dovetails with Huck Finn, see "The Heritage of the Western United States," an eighth-grade unit.

Twain's novel acts out Huck's initiation into adult society, his discovery of its fraudulence, and his rejection of civilization because of it.

With the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, Huck lives in a setting colored by the Evangelical Protestantism of the frontier town, a Protestantism which is the direct descendent of New England Calvinism. In that same environment appear the superstitions of the Negroes, many of which affect the white residents. Life at the Widow's is deadly dull--grace before meals, scoldings about his manners, attempts to teach him how to spell, threats of hell-fire. When Miss Watson tries to tell Huck about the power of prayer, and when he gets a fishing line without hooks in answer to his prayer, he doesn't think much of prayer. When he finds out Miss Watson wants to go to heaven when she dies, he decides he would rather go to the other place. And when the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson cannot agree upon the nature of Providence, Huck is further suspicious of the sincerity of their religious instructions. Twain's rhetoric here is a little like Melville's in Billy Budd if the anti-Calvinistic interpretation of Billy Budd is correct.

If Miss Watson plies Huck with frontier puritanism on the one hand, Tom Sawyer confronts him with bourgeois romanticism on the other. Tom is a boy whose whole life is an imitation of the romances he has read or heard from middle-class society. He is, in a way, the very symbol of mawkishly romantic, artificial civilization: a satirical picture of institutionalism. In many ways the entire novel is a satire on institutionalism. Both Tom and Jim are slaves to *institutionalism;* each has his own institution to consult and follow--Tom the rules of books, and Jim his taboos. Tom's romantic machinery obviously will not work, yet, he insists on its use. He is left helpless by the machinery of his code. Tom is as remote from reality in his romantic nonsense as is the adult community in its pretense of being virtuous. Huck in this sense too is alone, is an outcast. He has no rules to follow, no institution to consult. He follows the voice within him and develops a morality apart from that of the society in which he lives.

Huck is taken from the society of the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson by Pap. With Pap Twain provides a biting parody of Southern society. Huck's father is completely good for nothing if not downright evil; "he used to lay drunk with the hogs in the barnyard." Huck is Pap's son--at the beginning almost as much a child of Adam as his father. Pap ends up shot in the back on the floor of a brothel. Yet Pap knows his place in the social scale.

> Oh, yes, this is a wonderful govment, wonderful. Why, looky here. There was a free nigger there from Ohio--a mulatter, most as white as a white man . . . They said he could vote when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a' coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a state in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote ag'in.

But Huck rebels against the brutal situation he finds himself in with Pap--in Twain, evil is more often brutality than the calculating rationality which Hawthorne and Melville see as evil. Huck escapes from the brute father by setting the stage to make it appear as if he had been murdered, and, by his supposed death, establishes a kind of separation from civilization. Once he leaves Pap's cabin, Huck takes to the river a symbol of a world apart from the civilized one. And once he joins forces with Jim, Huck has found a symbolic "father" far different from the one from which he had escaped.

Both Huck and Jim are seeking freedom, freedom from society and its rules. This is not the traditional Christian concept of freedom--it is not the freedom Hester and Dimmesdale seek--freedom from the burden of individual guilt and sin, but freedom from social constraint. Evil in this novel is seen as mainly the product of civilization's developing of man's innate brutality. Huck, when he gets rid of the taint of social conditioning, is entirely free of anxiety and guilt. The trip down the river is Huck's education. The river itself becomes a kind of neutral territory--a source to which the young initiate may return for a refreshment, less mystical than that which Emerson and Thoreau describe, but not less refreshing, before his next encounter with a civilization filled with pretense and evil. Each time Huck goes ashore, he is taught another lesson respecting the evil of men in society. On the river he returns to the source of natural decency in the character of Jim. By the juxtaposition of the society on the raft and on the banks, Twain skillfully attacks the existing social order.

One of Huck's returns to society is his stay at the Grangerfords. As Southern aristocracy they exhibit the typical virtues: they are "cultured," dignified, proud, handsome, hospitable, courteous, generous, devout, etc. The value-system of their culture, however, is gradually undercut by Twain. Their tastes are a strange mixture of arrogant show and pathetic provincialism. Their "intellectual" pursuits consist of the worst kind of sentimentality, and they are brutally dedicated to the destruction of another family.

> Next Sunday we all went to Church, about three miles, everybody a-horseback. The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching--all about brotherly love, and such like tiresomeness; but everbody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say about faith, and good works, and free grace, and prefareor-destination, and I don't know what all, that it did seem to me one of the roughest Sundays I had run across yet.

The best people of the community go to worship a Calvinistic God on Sunday (with their guns) and, during the week, possess a deep and abiding hatred of each other, loyal, as they are, to an obsolete chivalric code, to outward rituals which they only act, to a mixture of chivalric honor and a strict Old Testament accounting according to an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. They are a people perfectly trained in the rituals of hypocrisy and the forms of empty honor.

What Huck witnesses in his next encounter with civilization is the sinister character of the phony aristocracy (the Duke of Bridgewater and the Dauphin of France) and the sinister character of aristocracy which has real power (Colonel Sherburn). The king and the duke in all their calculations provide a picture of the scum that worked the river towns; but they are also symbolic figures representing the dead institutions of the past. This is made explicit by Huck when he tells Jim that the king and the duke are not so bad when one considers what real kings and dukes have done in history. With the king and duke Huck returns to the bank civilization and witnesses the brutality of genuine aristocracy--sees Colonel Sherburn shoot in cold blood a harmless old drunk named Boggs, and Huck's comment on the residents of Bricksville deserves quotation:

> The ornery lot of tabacco chewing loafers of the town are never so happy as when they are sicking a few dozen dogs on a sow or putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him, or tying a tin pan to his tail and see him run himself to death.

In the town, Colonel Sherburn, one of the few aristocrats of the Bricksville region, acts only the role of homicide and perverts the goodness that a man of his status might be presumed to have. The degradation of the men of Bricksville is made even more evident when they form a mob and go to lynch Sherburn, and the speech Sherburn gives to the mob is one of the few really open attacks Twain makes on Southern society in Huckleberry Finn.[1]

Each time Huck and Jim return to the river they breathe more easily. They seem able to get rid of the contamination of the civilization along its banks. With the king and duke occupying their raft, however, Huck and Jim find the evil with them, even on the free river.

The last indignity which the King and Duke inflict on Huck is to sell Jim to the Phelpses. As Representatives of the human race, they show neither a sense of decency nor loyalty, only avarice. The last vision Huck has of the King and Duke is to see them tarred and feathered and being ridden on a rail by one audience which was not taken in. Huck comments, "Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another."

If Tom Sawyer, Grangerford, Duke, Dauphin, and Sherburn civilization is "romance" without honor, dogma denied in deed, than the Phelps civilization is "Christian" without compassion. Not only does Huck take an ironic view toward the elaborate rituals which Tom insists must be followed in assisting Jim to escape, he also takes an ironic view towards the household of the Phelpses. Although Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas consider themselves Christians, have no taste for violence, and are by impulse generous and humane, they happen also to be staunch upholders of certain degrading and inhuman institutions. When they are confronted with an escaped slave, the laws of social morality outweigh all professions of piety. When Huck tells Aunt Sally the riverboat he supposedly came on "blowed out a cylinder-head" she says:

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[1] The phony aristocrats, the King and the Duke, also take advantage of the lowest instincts of men with their Royal None Such. By adding to their handbills the statement, "LADIES AND CHILDREN NOT ADMITTED," They get an audience. As the Duke says, "There, if that line don't fetch them, I don't know Arkansaw!"

> "Good gracious! anybody hurt?"
>
> "No'm, killed a nigger."
>
> "Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt."

For all their "natural goodness" the Phelpses exhibit a shabby morality behind their sham piety.

Juxtaposed against the evil which Huck finds in the society along the river banks, are his experiences on the raft with Jim. When Huck first meets Jim, a fellow fugitive, on Jackson's Island, his first impulse is to freely promise Jim that he will not tell people that he is an escaped slave even though people would call him "a low-down Abolitionist." In Huck's time and place "abolitionist" was a word of utmost disgrace and shame. Mark Twain tells in his Autobiography that as a boy he was taught to regard slavery as an institution sanctioned by religion and an Abolitionist as a creature with claws and a tail. When Huck tells Tom, on the Phelps's farm, that he plans to liberate Jim, Huck can only expect Tom's disapproval. "You'll say it is dirty, low-down business; but what if it is?--I'm low-down." When Tom (who already knows Jim is free) offers to help, Huck is scandalized.

At this point Huck has already committed himself to help Jim, but the commitment has come hard. In Chapter 16 he has a battle with his conscience which instructs him to turn Jim over to the authorities. His conscience is, of course, a heritage from the Calvinistic civilization that he has tried to reject. It has been trained by the attitudes of a society which regards stealing a slave as a violation of the sanctity of property. Jim, thinking he has Huck's loyalty, confides that he intends, once he is free, to get an abolitionist to steal his children out of slavery, and Huck's reaction is, "It most froze me to hear such talk." Jim's criminal intention makes Huck realize the enormity of his own crime of concealing Jim: "My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, 'Let up on me--it ain't too late yet--I'll paddle ashore at the first light and tell.'" Now feeling "easy, and happy," he paddles the canoe toward two men in a skiff who ask him if the man on his raft is white or black. The words of betrayal "wouldn't come." Heart wins out; "He's white," Huck says at last.

Huck's final temptation shows clearly his realization that in the act of abetting Jim he loses not only his standing as a citizen but his soul as well. Not his crime, but his sin now seems enormous: "I most dropped in the tracks, I was so scared." His only recourse is an appeal to the final Authority. He tries to pray but his "heart warn't right"; it is still loyal to Jim. To make his heart right, he composes a letter to Miss Watson telling her where she may find Jim. With the letter before him, however, his memory releases a series of images of Jim's kindnesses toward him. Trembling in the intensity of his conflict between his love for the slave and his anxiety to save his soul, he finally says to himself, "All right, then, I'll go to hell," and tears up the letter. Thus does Twain suggest that conventional piety and even conventional conscience are more perverse and destructive than creative of human decency.

Huck's rejection of the forms and codes of society is not a sterile negation, but a clearing away of impediments to the knowledge of self and obligations to others; unlike the ordinary "picaro", he is not simply Lazarus at the gate, fatherless, afflicted, and an indictment of his society. He is society's antagonist. His "lesson" is not that Christians should practice what they preach--as the picaro's often is--but that Calvinistic Christian dogma must be replaced by some kind of humanism and a more "natural" mode of living.

Huck, who has lived through a number of days and nights with Jim on the raft and has had an opportunity to capture some of the warmth of his deep humanity, has come to be able to free himself from the social rules regarding slavery. There is only one instance of disagreement between Huck and Jim on the raft. When they are separated by the fog, Jim mourns Huck as dead and then, exhausted, falls asleep. When he awakens and finds Huck, he is overjoyed. Huck, however, convinces him that he has only dreamed the incident--that there has been no fog, no separation; he then allows Jim to make an elaborate "interpretation" of the dream he now believes he has had. Then the joke is sprung, and in the light of dawn Huck points to the debris of leaves on the raft and the broken oar.

> Jim looked at the trash, and then looked at me, and back at the trash again. He had got the dream fixed so strong in his head that he couldn't seem to shake it loose and get the facts back into place right away. But when he did get the thing straightened around, he looked at me steadily without ever smiling, and says: "What do dey stan' for? I's gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart waz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no' mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I woke up en find you back ag'in, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could 'a' got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed."

At this utterance Huck's last dim vestige of pride of status, his sense of his position a white man, wholly vanishes. "It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn't sorry for it afterward, neither."

Jim stands to Huck in this novel as a kind of father guiding him away from the folly of romance without honor, and Christianity (or Calvinistic pietism) without love. It is Jim who fathers Huck as they travel down the big river; who, knowing secretly that Huck's Pap is dead, cares for Huck through the ordeal of being lost. Jim's truth and sincerity exposes the fraud and hoax of the world along the river banks. Indeed, Jim is the moral conscience of the novel, the means by which all men are evaluated. As the two move down the river, Huck's whole moral sense develops out of and hovers over the presence of Jim. His whole sense of wrong, his feeling of guilt are products of his intimate association with Jim--his companionship with the runaway slave allows him to make moral growth. Throughout the novel there is a steady intensification of Huck's and the reader's awareness of the injustice, the hypocrisy and general moral ugliness and weakness of Calvinistic Southern society before the war. When Huck has reached his destination--both the end of the physical trip and the end of his education--he has completely rejected the kind of civilization that speaks goodness and practices evil. He has rejected Calvinistic theology and Calvinistic society. At the end of the book we find Huck fixed in that rejection.

> "But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt and sivilize me, and I can't stand it, I been there before."

The Ending

There has been a great deal of disagreement among critics as to the merit of the ending (The Phelps farm episode) of Huckleberry Finn. Lionel Trilling admits the episode is too long, but defends it as having "a certain formal aptness." The ending, claims Trilling, is a denial needed to permit Huck to return to his anonymity. Huck must give up the role of the hero because the glamour and attention which attend a hero at the end of a book do not fit Huck.

Perhaps the most effective attack against the ending has been made by Leo Marx. It is Marx's contention that the ending jeopardizes the significance of the entire novel. The most obvious thing wrong with it, states Marx, is the flimsy contrivance by which Jim is freed. He goes on to point out that it was Miss Watson's intention to sell Jim down the river which made the journey necessary in the first place. Her characterization in the early part of the novel is hardly in keeping with her change of heart at the end. The Phelps farm episode, according to Marx, is a device for resolution of the novel's essential conflict (a conflict that can't be resolved) and it is achieved only by the sacrifice of both the theme and the characters. Jim develops into a character of dignity and human warmth and Huck grows in stature as he develops morally. But with the reappearance of Tom, Huck reverts to the follower of Tom and falls into the background. In the closing episode Jim loses his individuality and becomes in Marx's words "the stage-Negro." The character of Jim and Huck and the theme of the novel are lost in Twain's maze of farcical invention.

The most elaborate defense of the ending of Huckleberry Finn has been made by Eric Solomon. Solomon stresses the theme of deception that runs through the novel and points out that family relationships provide the motivations for these lies. All the families Huck invents are families coming to death and destruction. At the Phelps farm Huck does not invent a family but has one forced on him by Aunt Sally. Solomon claims that at the Phelps farm Huck learns the nature of responsibility to a family and this is the true climax of his moral development. Huck does not sneak out to join Tom and Jim bacause "I wouldn't never do nothing to grieve her (Aunt Sally) any more." The episode is so long, according to Solomon, because it supplies the necessary time for Huck to use the family relationship to work out his attitudes towards truth and deception. It should be pointed out that Solomon believes Twain is presenting the Phelpses and their farm as a favorable portrait of the family institution. He does not see the Phelpses as included in Twain's satire on shabby Southern morality. Solomon denies that the last sentence of the novel ("But I reckon I got to light out for the territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before."), is made in seriousness.

Probably in the end, Huck's conquest of the "Pap" in him comes more from the river and Jim than from the Phelps family. The river and Jim are Twain's central symbols of the sources of goodness in a world perverse in both its belief and its departures from its belief. Notice that Twain's symbolism is primarily "natural" symbolism--symbolism using objects from ordinary life and given other significance by the context in which they occur in the novel. Melville's and Hawthorne's symbolism (or allegory) is much more largely Biblical--using objects drawn from the Bible and ordering life and given their significance by the contexts in which they occur in the Bible, in emblem literature, and in the novel.

VII. The Unvanquished:

The author whom Faulkner most nearly resembles is Hawthorne, although they do exhibit significant differences. Hawthorne had much the same attitude toward New England that Faulkner had toward the South. Both had a strong sense of the individuality of their region. The Civil War made Hawthorne feel that "the North and South were two distinct nations in opinions and habits, and had better not try to live under the same institutions." "New England," Hawthorne said, "is quite as large a lump of earth as my heart can really take in." But it was more than a lump of earth for him; it was a lump of history and a fixed state of consciousness. Like Faulkner in the South, he applied himself to creating its moral fables and enhancing the legends his mind's eye created for it.

Just as Hawthorne makes us know New England through his The Scarlet Letter, Faulkner makes us know the South through his The Unvanquished. Both works are characteristic of their place and their time. Both write works saturated with the mythology of their regions and people.

Faulkner nowadays is often regarded as a kind of philosophical or theological novelist. His remarks in Stockholm upon receiving the Nobel Prize have contributed much toward a new and more intelligent attitude toward the man and his work; they may help us understand his conception of innate depravity. In his memorable speech (which is extremely suggestive of Hawthorne) Faulkner said that "the problems of the human heart in conflict with itself . . . alone can make good writing because only that is worth writing about, worth the agony and the sweat." "A writer," he said should have "not room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths, lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed--love and honor and pity and pride and compassion and sacrifice." He refused "to accept the end of man." "Man," he declared is "immortal . . . because he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance"; the writer's works should not be "merely the record of man" but "one of the props, the pillars, to help him endure and prevail." The speech includes an attack on naturalistic or behavioristic readings of man's behavior--as if he were merely a bundle of glands. Prompted by these words, readers of Faulkner remembered examples in his stories of remarkable human endurance and fidelity to principle. As one reads The Unvanquished, he sees example after example of this power of people to endure: Granny--Mrs. Rosa Millard--who took on the responsibility to feed the whole war-stricken area in which she lived by carrying on a very dangerous and strenuous labor; John Sartoris who raised his own company of soldiers to oppose the Northern invaders; Drusilla who, once her fiance was killed, joined the army and performed the rigorous duties of a man; and Ringo and Bayard who persist in their pursuit of Grumby through two months of winter weather and under the most grueling of hardships; and Bayard Sartoris who, in his final test, faced up to a moral choice which called more for endurance of character than of body. All of these are remarkable examples of Faulkner's thought that man can, by moral choice, endure and sometimes can even prevail over the evil which drives the human heart into conflict with itself.

Faulkner treats the matter of man's limited perfectability in a social context; Southern society is less innocent than the Southern wild woods in Faulkner's works and Southern ante-bellum society is the source of a poison, which like original sin, goes down through the generations--the poison of a static and fixed obsessive concern for being right, for salving honor, for avenging oneself. The Sartoris family is atop the social pyramid in the created society of The Unvanquished, John Sartoris gives his life to keep it so. In the simplest terms, society is the subject of Faulkner's novel, not society as an abstract word used by an historian or sociologist describing pre- or post-Civil War conditions, but society as it existed in the memory of one boy who was to inherit and change the society of his father. Because we do see the social structure through the eyes of a boy, then a young man, we see it concretely, not abstractly; John Sartoris and Granny are unique individuals, not objects to be put into the slot of "heads of a southern family." Bayard not only remembers concrete events but he adds a dimension that the objective sociologist or scientific historian seldom adds: the dimension of value. And here we have the basic thematic tension of the novel between the existing social order and Bayard's changing evaluation of it. In a neat formula: the social order vs. the moral order. But of course the novel does not exist on this abstract social-moral level; it exists as a concrete fiction. Faulkner has recaptured a society of individuals, not an abstraction, and any discussion of social structure, norms, etc. must rest in a discussion of the characters themselves. But before we look at each character, let us outline the obvious Pre-Civil War social structure described in the novel so we may have a base of discussion for examining its moral structure.

First we must divide the characters into white and black. Each race has its own social structure. The whites have, of course, the Sartoris group as their leaders--John Sartoris (pronounced SARtoris), Rosa ("Granny") Millard (mother to John's first wife), Bayard, Drusilla (cousin to John on Rosa's side), Aunt Louise Millard (Rosa's sister), Aunt Jenny Du Pre (John's sister who appears only in the last section, "An Odor of Verbena"), Uncle Buck McCaslin (an eccentric aristocrat whose family is the subject of Go Down Moses), Mrs. Habersham, the women of Jefferson, and Wyatt (of this group, but without the prestige of the Sartoris')--these are the "aristocrats" who uphold the old order and fight to keep themselves at the top. The Sutpen's, the subject of perhaps Faulkner's greatest novel Absalom, Absalom!, are the newly rich who want to maintain the old order because it profits them (Thomas Sutpen is the man elected Colonel over John Sartoris), but they do not support John when he opposes the Carpet Baggers. We have few representatives of the "middle class" in the novel not because Faulkner snubs them, but because the Mississippi middle-class had few members in 1860. We must remember that the society of The Unvanquished is southern and agricultural--a society which produced a wide split between land owner, slave, and poor white. The unscrupulous Snopes of the Hamlet, The Town and The Mansion are Faulkner's version of the rising middle class. At the bottom is Ab Snopes, an opportunist without scruples who fathers the infamous Flem Snopes of The Hamlet, and Grumby, the white trash raider who is the inverse of John Sartoris, who raids his own people as well as the Yankees and who does a good deal to bring about the chaos of the war.

The white social structure determines the black. The house slaves of the Sartoris family are highest in the Negro scale--Ringo (perhaps the highest because of his friendship with Bayard), Joby (Ringo's grandfather), Louvinia (Joby's wife), Loosh (Ringo's uncle), Philadelphy (Loosh's wife). Few other negroes are individualized in the novel, but when they are, they assume their master's prestige. The mass of Negroes that Bayard, Granny, and Ringo meet on their way to Colonel Dick are impossible to classify; the very point of their new "freedom" is that they have no class but they are in many ways like the obviously "low class" Negroes rounded up by the Carpet Baggers. They have lost their masters and, hence, their prestige in the old order. This division into white-black does not capture the complete social structure by any means. Certainly Ringo is socially superior to Ab Snopes and Grumby in the eyes of the other whites and negroes, but his black skin places him below Ab and Grumby. Ringo is both socially above and below the criminal. He must still ride behind them, but he is recognized as morally superior by his society. The division of black-white is more complicated than skin color. This, then, is the structure of the "old order" that John Sartoris and Granny give their lives for, but do they give their lives just to "stay on top"? It is more than this, just as there is more to the society than the black-white division. Something beyond mere preservation of social status guides them, something we might call The Code, something that exists in the realm of ideals and morality. The Code supports the old order and is the force behind Sartoris' reconstruction attempts after the war.

The Code is a little like the "measured forms" which Vere sees as necessary to control the bestiality of mankind; Faulkner takes a somewhat Vere-like view of those "forms" except that he distinguishes between the human beasts who have no code (the Snopses of the Hamlet), the rigid sages who, like Don Quixote, hold to a code which answers only a limited social purpose or no purpose at all (Granny and John Sartoris) , and the free men who hold to the social code and also do what their private, regenerate moral sense demands (Bayard).

The Code itself combines two rather unlikely spirits, the spirit of southern Calvinism (Granny) and the spirit of chivalric romance (John Sartoris) into an ethic of honor. Faulkner's view of that ethic of honor is very different from the view established in Huck Finn. We might call Granny's Calvinism "practical" rather than theological or metaphysical; we never know her thoughts on predestination or election--only her strict addition and subtraction of sins.[1] Each sin must be paid for from washing out Bayard's mouth with soap to her own public confession when she takes on the sins of the children.

Granny with her bars of soap attempts to maintain a rigid and traditional sense of right and wrong, a sense totally inappropriate to the events of the Civil War. This disparity between her sense of the event and the event produces much of the wonderful humor of her quest for the mules, slaves and silver. She believes that the Yankee Colonel will give back the property "stolen" from her household by Loosh; she believes Colonel Dick is a gentleman and will respect her wishes because she is a Lady. She achieves her goal, but Colonel Dick, rather than respecting her as a Lady, patronizes her as an heroic woman who does not understand the situation just as he patronized her when she lied to him about the boys. And Granny still does not understand when she confronts Grumby with the forged letter. Though Grumby is certainly not Colonel Dick, Granny expects him to be Colonel Dick and to treat her with respect. The mistake costs her her life. Grumby is the inverse of the honorable gentleman--the parody of the gentleman with his torn uniform and his crimes, his lack of respect for order, for honor, or for courage. The Code demands respect for courage, the type of courage Granny certainly has, the type of courage that Bayard "inherits" from her. Even in the mule swapping escapades, Granny is not only comic, she takes upon her soul the Calvinistic sins of stealing, lying and alliance with the devil (here Ab Snopes and Grumby, who might, with a bit of stretching, represent man in his "natural" state of original sin) in order to restore the old order for John Sartoris. Her view is that God willed that Col. Dick give her more mules, slaves and silver than she had asked for; to her way of thinking, it is God's will to rebuild the old order. As she steals, deceives and lies to get money for the reconstruction, she always has the image and dreams of John Sartoris before her; both comic and tragic, she attempts to restore an old order in the midst of a chaos that will never again accept its code. Perhaps the best picture of her impotence in trying to combat moral chaos occurs when she responds as her wagon is swept to the river by the mass of negroes.

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[1] It might be confusing to call Granny a Calvinist when her formal church affiliation is Episcopalian, but in the South, 1860, an Episcopalian was a respectable Calvinist or Baptist. Church affiliation was social rather than doctrinal with the Episcopal at the top and the Negro Baptist at the bottom. This makes Granny's final confession before a Baptist congregation all the more effective because it is a sinner confronting God rather than an Episcopalian, Baptist or what have you, confronting God.

> I don't know where he (a Yankee officer) came from, how he ever got to us, but there he was with his little white face with a stubble of beard and a long streak of blood on it, bareheaded and with his mouth open. "Get back!" he shrieked. "Get back! We're going to blow the bridge!" Screaming right into Granny's face while she shouted back at them with Mrs. Compson's hat knocked to one side of her head and hers and the Yankee's face not a yard apart: "I want my silver! I'm John Sartoris' mother-in-law! Send Colonel Dick to me!" Then the Yankee officer was gone, right in the middle of shouting and beating at the nigger heads with his saber, with his little bloody shrieking face and all . . . . Cousin Drusilla had the nigh horse by the bridle again, and I dragged at them, too, and Granny was standing up in the wagon and beating at the faces with Mrs. Compson's parasol.

While Granny represents the Code's Calvinistic rigidity and strictness, John Sartoris represents its romantic and individual facet; both share its love of heroism and courage. John's heroics depend upon his position as the leader of his regiment. When he is demoted by his men to second in command, he leaves the regiment rather than share the glory and return to Mississippi to raid the Yankee invasion army. As romantic and heroic as John's raids are when we view the war from a distance, his brief skirmishes are petty and totally self-centered. His behavior is just as inappropriate as Granny's; his "battles" will defeat no enemy, only humiliate them, since the Union Army certainly has a warehouse stuffed with blue pants. His place is with his original regiment as a major; his "desertion" constitutes a form of treason. The Confederate Army lost an excellent Cavalry officer and Mississippi gained a Hero. But John, like Granny, misjudges the war as a war among gentlemen possessed of mutual respect and courage; actually, the war is a war of machine vs. machine. The rules favor the largest machine, not necessarily the most courageous men. The Yankees systematically destroy the South with superior machines, not superior cavalry tactics. Total war on the civilian population as well as on the army is the strategy that Grant and Sherman gave to the Yankees, a strategy that had to be used to beat the South. But John Sartoris sees only the raid, the cavalry charge, and private guts. The future is with Grant, not Lee or Jackson, and the Union tactics change the concept of war for a century. As attractive as the character of John Sartoris is, his use of The Code is as inadequate as Granny's. John does not reconstruct Jefferson's political system; he merely re-establishes the superfices of the old order.

Oddly enough John's most heroic act is the destruction of his own ideal. John tries to perpetuate the Confederate army organization after the war by taking the election of the Federal Marshall into his own hands. The Carpet

Baggers are the lowest human beings in the novel, and their action creates the monstrous organization that "reconstructs" the South. But John's action, as "heroic" as it might be, solves nothing. When John walks into Redmond's office with the derringer that he never uses and virtually commits suicide by facing Fedmond's anger and bullets, he is heroic by repudiating The Code's demand for revenge while accepting The Code's demand for honor and courage. He sacrifices himself and, in so doing, repudiates his dreams and hopes by ending the chain of violence. We may best capture the figure of John Sartoris and his Code by looking through Bayard's memory at the tableau of a hero:

> There is a limit to what a child can accept, assimilate; not to what it can believe because a child can believe anything, given time, but to what it can accept, a limit in time, in the very time which nourishes the believing of the incredible. And I was still a child at the moment when Father's and my horses came over the hill and seemed to cease galloping and to float, hang suspended rather in a dimension without time in it while Father held my horse reined back with one hand.
> (p. 58)

The static, motionless and romantic picture of John Sartoris remains in the memory of Bayard, unfortunately, a memory more right than wrong; for John himself remains static and lives out a timeless notion, an ideal that ignores change and renders itself tragi-comic. John is heroic and wrong.

But John is only wrong; Drusilla is insane. Drusilla extends The Code far past any sane limits by her emphasis on courage and revenge; like Granny, she will not yield to change nor recognize the inappropriateness of her actions. Her idea of solution to a problem is to gallop away on a horse shooting. Drusilla does, however, recognize that there is a war, and that finery and lace just are not part of it. The war continues within her mind, a mind captured by the Code's demands for vengeance. She wants Bayard to continue to obey The Code by avenging the death of his father, and, although she recognizes the courage in Bayard, she cannot fogive him for facing Redmond unarmed. Her intense and static vision of the South Bayard recognizes when she tells him of the chase she witnessed between a Rebel and a Yankee locomotive:

> We saw it, we were there, as if Drusilla's voice had transported us to the wandering light-ray in space in which was still held the furious shadow--the brief section of track which existed inside the scope of a single pair of eyes and nowhere else, coming from nowhere and having, needing, no destination, the engine not coming into view but arrested in human sight in thunderous yet dreary fury, lonely, inviolate and forlorn, wailing through its whistle precious steam which could have meant seconds at the instant of passing and miles at the end of its journey . . . --the flaring and streaming smoke stack, the tossing bell, the starred Saint Andrew's cross nailed to the cab roof, the wheels and the flashing driving rods on which the brass fittings glinted like the golden spurs themselves--then gone, vanished. Only not gone or vanished either, so long as there should be defeated or the descendants of defeated to tell it or listen to the telling.

> "The other one, the Yankee one, was right behind it," Drusilla said. "But they never caught it. The next day they came and tore the track up . . . they could tear the track up but they couldn't take back the fact that we had done it. They couldn't take that from us."
>
> (p. 80)

The passage demands close reading because it contains the basic idea of the novel. The Rebel locomotive whistles using steam that might help it later and the brass fittings sparkle like spurs, like the heroic figure of John Sartoris arrested in time, as if the locomotive and John were ideals existing outside of time. The locomotive goes by but remains in the mind of Drusilla, of Bayard and Ringo who are listening to her and, we assume, of all who hear of it. As Drusilla says, "they couldn't take back the fact that we had done it"; the Yankees could not catch the locomotive just as they could not defeat the individual heroic act, but they do tear up the track, they do have Grant and Sherman to destroy the South with the only possible weapon: total war on all the people of the South, not just its heroes. This wildly attractive image of the locomotive captures the young Bayard, and it is this image of the South he must change. Bayard retains the courage (he cannot reject it because he is part of it) but repudiates the immobility of the ideal. The ideal must change if anything is to survive, and Bayard learns that he as head of the Sartoris' must change it.

Thus far we have been treating the characters of the novel as if they were seen by an objective observer, but to consider them as completely objective portraits would be to dismiss the most important aspect of the novel: Bayard's memory. Any consideration of character or event must be dual; Bayard always participates in the action and in the remembering. Bayard must learn what his past was, evaluate it in the present so that he may act in the future. Through Bayard we are reminded of Faulkner's statement in As I Lay Dying that "what was, is and what is, was." Man can never escape from his past, and in The Unvanquished the past is not a history book past but a completely individual past existing in a young man's mind. We might say the past is remembered rather than recorded objectively, and as such the memory of Bayard produces the form of the book, and what Bayard learns produces the theme.

What Bayard learns should be obvious by now but perhaps a comparison of four similar events--Granny's death, Grumby's death, Sartoris's death, and Bayard's confrontation with Redmond--will demonstrate the process. Granny's death, which we discussed in some detail above, is a confrontation between The Code and unprincipled, self-interested fear. Granny's imprudent trust in a man who does not recognize even the word trust negates the very courage she has. Bayard and Ringo act out the demands of the Code avenging Granny's death. Their revenge comes not so much in Grumby's death as in the brutality of nailing his dismembered hand to the door. Bayard's acceptance of the Code shows his early inability to change his past but he had learned one thing: that he alone is responsible for his past and that he, not Ringo or George Wyatt, must seek revenge. The third death is John's. John Sartoris walks into Redmond's gun and courage just as Granny walked into Grumby's gun and fear. The courage and the fear define exactly the differences between the two deaths. John confronts Redmond knowing what the outcome will be; he knows that he will be killed because Redmond has the courage to kill him; Granny does not understand her enemy, and she does not know she will be killed. John's death is sacrificial just as is Granny's, but he sacrifices himself to The Code to end its folly. The act is consistent: he dies an individual and romantic death. He dies because of an "eye for an eye" morality; now he is the victim delivered in part. John still takes the derringer with him to his death; he cannot fully relinquish violence. But Bayard goes unarmed to see a Redmond who cannot kill the younger Sartoris. John's death points the way to Bayard's action, and Bayard learns from it. In denying violence and revenge Bayard forsakes the demands for vengeance of The Code without denying its demands for courage. In the process, he also forsakes Drusilla and Ringo who both want Bayard to murder Redmond. Drusilla thinks of Bayard as her young knight and offers herself to him in the fullest ritual of The Code:

> "Bayard." She faced me, she was quite near; again the scent of the verbena in her hair seemed to have increased a hundred times as she stood holding out to me, one in either hand, the two dueling pistols. "Take them, Bayard," she said, in the same tone in which she had said "Kiss me" last summer, already pressing them into my hands, watching me with that passionate and voracious exaltation, speaking in a voice fainting and passionate with promise: "Take them. I have kept them for you. I give them to you." (p. 179)

Bayard refuses the pistols and the revenge and in so doing, destroys The Code while gaining a new kind of courage. He has conquered Faulkner's version of "inherited sin."

Eliot, in describing man's imperfection, says "From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit runs unless consumed by that refining fire where you must move in measure like a dancer." Bayard's South is an exasperated spirit moving from wrong to wrong; Bayard's act is a consuming by a refining fire and a release from the vengeance cursing the South.

VIII. STYLE

Some students may balk when they try to read Faulkner. There are several stylistic elements which arouse this negative feeling though The Unvanquished has fewer of the stylistic "problems" than any other Faulkner novel. One thing that bothers some readers is Faulkner's concept of time, a concept which determines, in part at least, the structure of his novels, and constitutes another aspect of his concern with the motive of truth.

A. Time and Style:

Faulkner regards time as having both an objective and a subjective aspect. It exists objectively regardless of the presence or absence of any one person; subjectively it depends upon the individual's awareness of it. Since time manifests itself through change, it is identical with man's experience, at least in retrospect; and contained in his own consciousness. This dual aspect of time is evident especially in Chapter II, "Raid," in The Unvanquished. Pages 72 to 74 when Bayard and Ringo arrive at Hawkhurst is a case in point. Bayard had been at Hawkhurst before the war and seen the railroad in its original state. Ringo had never seen the railroad and feels cheated because Bayard has had this experience which he could not share. Now as they arrive at Hawkhurst, the railroad has been destroyed. Bayard is matching his present experience of the destroyed railroad with the railroad as it was originally; Ringo is experiencing the railroad now in its state of destruction with the railroad of heresay--what Bayard had told him about it. The respective consciousness of Bayard and Ringo brings a different time sense to this experience; the railroad thus becomes two different realities as objective and subjective aspects of time are matched or fail to match.

The objective time pattern of The Unvanquished is not difficult to follow: Faulkner has provided clear signals for the reader. At the opening of Chapter I, "Ambuscade," we learn that the Civil War is in progress and that the Northern Army has taken Vicksburg. John Sartoris is back at his plantation building fence; he has come quickly--not from Tennessee but from a point nearer to Alabama. We know that the Northern Army is winning and that the Southern Armies are retreating and, in some cases, scattering. In this chapter Bayard and Ringo are twelve or thirteen years old. In Chapter II, "Retreat," we learn that the events of Chapter I had taken place the summer before--when the two boys had shot at the Yankee and killed his horse. In Chapter III, "Raid," Bayard is fourteen years old. Only a few months have elapsed since Chapter II. Chapter IV, "Riposte in Tertio," follows almost immediately. The title, Riposte, means a quick thrust after a parry--it is a dueling term. Thus this chapter is the return thrust of Rosa Millard, Ab Snopes, Ringo, and Bayard Sartoris to the Yankees' burning of the Sartoris mansion and also their immediate reaction to a jumbled situation among the Southern troops when they gained more than their originally lost silver and mules. Chapter V, "Vendee," follows immediately upon Chapter IV; several months elapse in this chapter, two months alone in the pursuit of Grumby. Chapter VI, "Skirmish at Sartoris," opens with the Civil War concluded, the men defeated. Here there is a reference to the burning of the mansion in 1864; therefore only a few months have elapsed between Chapters V and VI. The final chapter, "The Odor of Verbena," indicates a considerable lapse of time. Bayard is now at college, twenty years old.

Faulkner's vocabulary is very complex. As long as Faulkner restricts his writing to an account of an immediate action, vocabulary and language present no pressing problem. But when a more abstract level of language is used, when a character becomes involved with an extended soliloquy, employing abstract and general rather than concrete and particular words, the handling of words, their function and meaning grows more and more enriched with connotative significance. Some readers get lost and are unable to follow such soliloquies all the way because they expand from the concrete known to the abstract unknown. In some passages the reader must depend upon an exacting knowledge of connotation to capture Faulkner's story, i.e., pp. 76-78. Here the language takes on richer and richer connotations until its meaning may elude all but the most sensitive reader or until the experience becomes so involved that the reader is unable to follow it through its convolutions. The highly involved sentences are an element in Faulkner that sets him apart from many of the writers of his time. He is at an opposite pole from Hemingway, whose sentences are direct, simple, and spare. The contrast is almost as sharp in the prose of these two as it is between the poetry of Whitman and Dickinson.

B. Sentence Structure and Style

Because Faulkner has created some extraordinarily effective sentences, the teacher should help students learn how these are structured rhetorically. To inform himself of the process, the teacher might first study "The Rhetoric of the Short Units of the Composition: Part A. The Rhetoric of the Sentence." This is a fuller presentation of Professor Francis Christensen's theories of sentence expansion than that which follows. One of the results of this kind of sentence analysis is to enable students to write more interesting and effective sentences; another, is the student's increasing appreciation of the sentences which professional writers compose. And this appreciation is closely allied to literary appreciation.

By analyzing many sentences of first-rate contemporary American writers, Professor Christensen discovered that their sentences tend to move from the general to the specific, from the abstract to the concrete. Seventy-five percent of such sentences begin with a fairly simple general statement (independent clause). After this the author has added one or more elements (when several are used, they are usually in parallel structure) which specify or give concreteness to the general term (s) of the opening independent clause. These additions may very well have additions to them. In a written analysis of such sentences, Professor Christensen assigns 1. to the independent clause and 2. to the next dependent element. Thus a complex sentence of one independent clause and two dependent clauses of the same concreteness will be labeled thus:

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1.
    2.
    2.
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If the second dependent clause is a modifier of the first dependent clause, his labels will appear in this manner:

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1.
    2.
        3.
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The teacher may substitute for the expression dependent clause any dependent element, especially the several phrasal types - appositive, prepositional, participle, etc.

In the student packet of this unit appear several language exercises based on Faulkner's sentence rhetoric. In order that the teacher will be able to direct the students in understanding how to perform these exercises, this packet contains several samples of other Faulkner sentences analyzed below and an explanation of these analyses.

Our first example is that of what Professor Christensen calls the two-level sentence: (The number of the page upon which each sentence appears in the text is indicated after it.)

A.
1. [You] Just tell him
    2. [that] I can ride and
    2. that I don't get tired. (p. 82)

Here we have inserted in brackets two words which are implied. Although the first level of this sentence is not properly a complete statement, to arrange the analysis as we have allows the reader to see the relative importance of the parallel dependent clauses to the independent clause. In this sentence the two dependent clauses are not so much additions as completions. A better example might be this example:

1. The bearded man backed to the other horse
    2. without lowering his pistol or
    2. [without] ceasing to watch Grumby (p. 139)

In this sentence the participle phrases are additions rather than completions. Notice how the two phrases add detail and suggest to the reader the cautious manner in which the bearded man backs.

Although Faulkner may use many short simple sentences or many long compounded sentences, it is not easy to find two-level sentences in his writing. He tends to use multi-level sentences which carry additions to the third, fourth, even ninth degree of specificity. For this reason let us look at further examples in which levels are carried.

This sentence exhibits three levels.

B.
1. But at last he realized
    2. that Granny was right,
    2. that they would have to be careful
        3. about what general's name was on the letter
        3. as well as what mules they requisitioned. (p. 101)

Notice that the two second level clauses complete the main clause but the two third level clauses relate only to the second of the two-level clauses. This example demonstrates how carefully one needs to examine the parts of sentences if he is to see which are related to which. A student might look upon this exercise as a purely mechanical one and thus tend to be undiscriminating in his assigning level numbers to the several parts. The teacher needs to anticipate this kind of error and give careful, clear explanations of what he is doing when he teaches students to make sentence analyses.

Let us look at another multi-level sentence composed of two general statements.

C.

1. They were fighting now, (p. 85)
   2. the horses rearing and shoving against them,
   2. the troopers
      3. beating at them with their scabbards
      3. holding them clear of the bridge
         4. while the infantry began to cross;
1. all of a sudden there was an officer beside the wagon
   2. holding his scabbarded sword by the little end like a stick and
   2. hanging onto the wagon and
   2. screaming at us.

Each main clause is analyzed separately and its additions classified according to their relation to the main clause and/or to each other. In the first half of the sentence the 2's are absolute phrases adding specificity to the main clause, the 3's are parallel modifiers of *troopers*, and the 4 relates to the second 3. In the second half of the sentence, we find three parallel, second-level structures - verbal phrases, relating equally to the main clause.

The final example is a very elaborate sentence, but it is equally susceptible to analysis according to Prof. Christensen's theories of multi-level sentences as simple sentences.

D.

   2. Singly, in couples (p. 83)
   2. in groups and families
1. they began to appear from the woods
   2. ahead of us,
   2. along side of us and
   2. behind;
1. they covered and hid from sight the road
   2. exactly as an infiltration of flood water would have,
      3. hiding
         4. the road from sight and then
         4. the very wheels of the wagon
            5. in which we rode
      3. our two horses as well as Bobolink breasting slowly on
         4. enclosed by a mass of heads and shoulders -
   2. men and women carrying babies and dragging older children by the hand,
   2. old men and women on improvised sticks and crutches, and
      3. very old ones setting beside the road and even calling to us
         4. when we passed:
1. there was one old woman
   2. who even walked beside the wagon
      3. holding to the bed and
      3. begging Granny to at least let her see the river
         4. before she died.

If one carried this analytical process to a very fine point, he might want to break this sentence down further. However, the teacher should be careful not to over-elaborate this system. Over-elaborated it could confuse the student rather than make clear the levels of sentences. It may also prevent his desiring to imitate such sentences even where they might be appropriate in his own writing.

It does not seem necessary for students in learning this system to always be able to label with appropriate names the various structures composing a sentence. Students may instinctively see that two participle or two absolute phrases are parallel, but they may not know that these are called participle or absolute phrases.

The real usefulness of this language exercise is in enabling students to write more interesting sentences themselves. The analysis of literary sentences is only a means of getting an understanding of how writers structure effective sentences and of providing models or patterns upon which students can structure their own.

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

MAN AND SOCIETY:
AMERICAN MATERIALISM: SATIRE:

Grade 11

Experimental Materials
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Nebraska Curriculum Development Center

CORE TEXTS:

Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (New York: New American Library, Signet Paperback, CT9), 75¢.
T.S. Eliot, Wasteland and Other Poems (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., Harvest Book, HB-1), 95¢.
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gadsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, SL-1), $1.25.

OVERVIEW: Man and Society: American Materialism: Satire

The following unit concludes a three part series of eleventh grade studies which treat three literary themes in American civilization. "Individualism and Nature," the first unit in the series, examined the idealism and respect for the individual of four major American writers of the 19th century. "Sin and Loneliness," the second unit in the series, led the student to consider the American conscience, from its puritan background to its manifestation in modern American literature. In "Satire: American Materialisism," students read the works of three American authers who attack modern American civilization. Democratic idealism and a respect for "the good life". The American conscience, they claim, has been necessarily muffled in this quest for riches. The figures in their novels and poetry as in their world are conforming, faceless individuals completely devoted to a religion of material accumlation.

Whether this indictment against the American people is true or not must be a matter of speculation. The student should not be encouraged to decide the question in a simple way—since such encouragement might well bring about almost endless controversy on an issue which is a great deal more complex than one to be settled with a simple "yes" or "no" answer. The teacher should only ask that his students acquaint themselves with the texts and analyze the critical viewpoint of each author. The purpose of the unit is to enable the students to arrive at a better understanding of their culture, not to bring them to a particular judgment about it.

The packet contains an essay on influences at work on the American mind and in American society which may have led American civilization toward a philosophy of materialism—if, indeed, the charges of Lewis, Fitzgerald, Eliot and other American social critics are true. The teacher is free, of course, to use as much or as little of this material as he thinks his students require to supplement their study. Biographical information of each of the authors, critical essays on the core texts, suggested topics for student compositions, and a list of possible extended activities complete the packet.

I. American Materialism: The Ideological Roots

Philosophies of materialism assume many different forms, some very simple and others relatively sophisticated, but they all share the conviction that man's existence in all its aspects, even man's "thinking" and "willing", depends upon matter. Materialism denies philosophical dualism, the belief that man is partly material and partly spiritual; according to the materialistic philosopher the "free will," any sort of "spirit," and idealism in general, do not exist—or if they do exist have no important real influence on the conduct of human life.

Materialism as a tradition in Western philosophy begins with Leucippus and Democritus, Greeks of the 5th century B.C., who explain the universe as a collection of atoms. Plato records Socrates, attack on their position in the Phaedo. Christianity more or less quieted the tradition until, in the 17th century, Thomas Hobbes and Pierre Gassendi attempted to defend the study of natural science by appealing to a materialistic view of the universe. The 18th century's Age of Enlightenment saw the spread of a philosophy of materialism, particularly as a theory of psychology. By the 19th century the question of whether or not man was completely material had become an abiding concern for the Western intellectual, who tended to imagine science on one side of the issue and religion on the other. As Americans attempted to bring their new world of age culturally, they could not avoid being drawn into the intellectual battles of Europe and England. Thus, despite a strong distaste for the "things of the world" their Calvinistic background had inculcated in them, Americans soon found that, at least as a theory, they had to admit a degree of materialism into their maturing society.

A. Auguste Comte

One of the most significant of 19th century philosophers who propounded a materialistic philosophy is Auguste Comte, a Frenchman whose writings reached America by way of England. Comte, who is generally regarded as the father of sociology, drew his ideas together from a broad spectrum of earlier writers; but he is especially indebted to David and Immanuel Kant. Positivism, as Comte termed his philosophy, held that societies move through three stages of progressive development. At the initial level of social development man explains nature and society by assuming the existence of divine beings, spirits, which govern the world; during this period, society is organized for military aims. In the second stage of development, philosophy replaces theology; man uses reason, instead of superstition, to discover why the world is what it is. Having achieved its military conquests, the aim of a society is to defend them. The third, final, and highest level of man's social development is reached when he rejects metaphysics and turns to science as the best means of explaining himself and his world. Only science, Comte argued, can empirically test, and thus "prove," its conclusions; science, in effect, is the most advanced, most certain, explanation man can offer about reality. Society, too, would be the subject of science; individual acts and motives, Comte theorized, are determined by their "setting" in the widest sense of the word. The science of society, accordingly, would successfully reveal the principles behind human actions, as surely as the physicist had explained the behavior of matter by the law of gravity. In this third stage of development, the aim of society would be industrialization. As his ideas and society changed, so would man's idea of morality: in the first stage, the individual achieved moral identity primarily in the family; in the second period, the individual's moral identity comes from the state; in the last level of his development, the individual's moral identity is founded in the race.

Comte's Positivism is materialistic in many respects. The progress of society from one stage of development to another depends upon matter, or, more correctly, upon man's compulsion to understand the material world.

The success or failure of any system of ideas--theology, metaphysics, or science---depends upon the capacity of the system to explain the material. Positivism is more obviously materialistic in its view of man: man can be the subject of science, and therefore behave as predictably as a certain quantity of matter, only because he is, according to Comte, completely material himself.

The influence of Positivism soon made itself felt in the classrooms and libraries of Europe and England, encouraging a positivist outlook in many areas of study. H.A. Taine and Ernest Renan in literature, John Stuart Mill in economics and political theory and Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen in history, to name a few, widely propagated positivist principles. Even in religion, Comte's influence was at work stimulating the growth of liberal Christian movements and furthering a kind of scientifically-inspired humanism.

B. Darwin

A second powerful historical influence on American thought, and an impetus toward diminishing faith in Christianity and the importance of the individual, were the theories of Charles Darwin (1809-1882). In 1859, Darwin published The Origin of Species . . . , the result of observations he had made more than twenty years before when he had been a member of a surveying expedition off the South American coast. Darwin theorized that a species descends from a common parentage; changes in the species, he believed, were partly explained by heredity and partly by the struggle for existence. In the struggle for existence, some variations of a species would live, others die, because their heredity (their inherited organic form) was superior or inferior to the hardships their environment presented to them. In 1871, in The Descent of Man . . . , Darwin applied his evolutionary theory to the human race.

The theory was immediately attacked, especially by English theologians. To suppose that plants and animals, and above all man himself, were not the result of a special act of creation by God seemed to them blasphemous. Darwin, they argued further, had declared mind to be matter, since he apparently held that man had descended down an evolutionary ladder from a mindless, primitive form of life. Evolutionary ideas left no room, they claimed, for a biblical account of creation, Adam's Fall, and Original Sin. Darwin had, it appeared, attacked Christian theology and philosophy: in particular, he had contradicted the philosophical position which argues to the existence of God because there is order and design in nature. According to Darwinism, nature was continually in a state of savage chaos. Besides flying in the face of orthodox theology and philosophy, Darwin's work flew in the face of many popular Christian beliefs of the time; his theory did not, for example, support the notion the world was six thousand years old, a figure derived by noting references to time in the Bible and adding them up.

As Darwin's theory was propagated, interpreted, and debated, many felt that no compromise was possible between science, as championed by Darwin, T.H. Huxley, and others, and the Christian religion. There was also a conviction that the truths of material science were evident, while the spiritual truths of religion were obscure and uncertain. Those who stood for science often tended to become exponents of a completely materialistic view of nature and society; T.H. Huxley is perhaps a good example of a radical materialist of the 19th century. For many of those who could not bring themselves to abandon religion, yet who clearly saw the supposed conflict between faith and science, the appeal of an orthodox theology was considerably lessened. A subdued, humanistic kind of Christianity, in some sort of agreement with the teachings of science, became more acceptable after Darwin. Matthew Arnold, a major spokesman for a humanistic Christianity, sought to encourage a religion of "scientific fact."

Darwin's evolutionary theory, like Comte's positivism, undermined the popular belief in an absolute moral code. Darwin viewed man's moral beliefs as an instrument of collective survival: moral beliefs which conferred benefits on the social units abiding by them were "good"; those which did not were "bad." Ethics, in short, became a norm relative to social success or failure.

C. Freud

A third ideological influence on the growth of American philosophic materialism was the theories of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Although they were formulated at the turn of the century, the theories did not reach the American reading public until the 1920's and '30's. The popularized versions of his basic ideas were much discussed and became, in many instances, a supposedly sophisticated justification for uninhibited sexual life. Freud had proven, it was believed, that man was but an animal, one whose behavior was primarily shaped by his sexual instincts. Every human activity was seen as latently sexual, and any frustration was said to stem primarily from the aggressive instincts of the libido. Freud's interpretation of religion and morality were also much discussed. His view of religion as a ritualistic exorcism of sexual guilt, and morality as the embodiment of sexual convention and superstition, was a sharp attack upon the prevailing religious faith of the American nation. If his arguments did not completely convince a good many Americans, at least they raised doubts difficult to resolve. Nor was Freud alone in dismissing religion as a matter of superstition. Widely read works like F.G. Frazer's The Golden Bough, a comparative study of the world's religions, also presented a sharp challenge to Christianity.

It is impossible to estimate the influence Freud's theories had. It is probably safe to assume, however, that in many instances the theories were no more than convenient shields against the social criticism of illicit behavior. But certainly they were a far cry from the orthodox teachings that Americans of the early part of this century had received from their parents. The new ideas propagated the notion that man is not morally responsible for his behavior and that he can not gain both happiness and nobility by restraining his animal instincts. The doctrines that man is born imperfect, in sin, and that he must expiate his sins were absolutely denied in Freud's books. His arguments not only conflicted with the beliefs of the well-established American religions, they also clashed with the romantic and transcendental view that man achieves perfection, or near perfection, by allowing divinity or a beneficent nature to shine through him.

Exposure to Freudian theory may have been salutary for those so Calvinistically oriented that they were paralyzed by a sense of personal unworthiness. But these ideas may also have had--or will prove to have, as they become more and more widely accepted--a profound effect upon public morality.

D. Marx

The American development of socialist theories of politics, economics, and history is a complex one, going back finally to the days of the Pilgrims. But in the first half of the 20th century, particularly because of the post-1848 German immigrations to the United States, socialism has been an important factor in American thought. During the 1930's, especially, was the interest in socialism and Marxism high. Early in the century, American writers like Frank Norris, Thorstein Veblen, Upton Sinclair, Ida Tarbell, and others had, by their devastating social criticism, laid a foundation for this interest.

Marx (1818-1883) and other socialists based much of their doctrines on David Ricardo's labor value theory. This theory of classical economics maintains that the value or worth of a commodity depends on the amount of labor time devoted to its production. The struggle of various classes to control production, and therefore to control both labor and value, has, according to Marx and others, a predominating influence on the course of every aspect of civilization. Government, history, religion, ethics, and art are, for examples, only manifestations of the economic constitution of the state and the world. Marxism promised that a just society, and therefore a perfect man, would result if only labor could receive its fair compensation, which is the value of the products its time produces.

Marx's view of economics as the mainspring on which man's world turns is, of course, completely materialistic. It was often considered, and still is considered a "realistic" challenge to "idealistic" interpretations of man and society. Between 1880 and 1920, as the industrial development of the nation accelerated and more and more attention was paid to "getting ahead," socialist and Marxist teachings were respectfully considered, especially among the poor in large, industrial American cities. During the 1930's, when it appeared as if the capitalistic system had failed to meet the needs of the American economy, Marxism in particular got an even better hearing. The American Socialist Party, the I.W.W., and--in the 20's and 30's--the American Communist Party, were, at one time or another, effective spokesmen for the ideas of Marx and the socialists. Dissensions within these parties, a strongly anti-socialist labor movement, periodic legislative reform, and the accessibility of middle class life to the poor were probably the most important factors in preventing the institutionalization of a decidedly socialistic system of government and industry in America. But so great an impact did Marxism and socialism have upon the American mind that many of their theorems have been assimilated into popular theories that touch almost every aspect of American life. And, it might well be argued, a consequence of this assimilation has been an increasing philosophic materialism among certain segments of the American populace.

III. American Materialism: The Historical Basis

A. Disillusionment (1865-1917)

The character of American society radically changed in the period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of World War I. An important part of this change was the experience of disillusionment, despite the fact that during these years the nation grew with vigor and speed into an industrial giant. The Jeffersonian ideal of an American democracy composed of honorable men was badly tarnished by corruption in government and industry.

The corruption started at the very top: President Grant's reputation was considerably blackened by the exposure of the Credit Mobilier, a railroad construction company that took a tremendous payoff from the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad. To prevent an investigation of their activities, the Mobilier had bribed the President and members of Congress withstock in the company (which paid dividends of 350%). Local politics fared scarcely better. North and south, city and state governments were often in the hands of unscrupulous entrepreneurs like "Boss" Tweed,who extracted from New York fifty to two hundred million dollars by employing almost every kind of graft, including fraudulent elections. In many instances it was revealed that even the judiciary could be purchased. James Fisk, the "Barnum of Wall Street", and the more sedate, cunning Jay Gould are examples of the powerful speculators of the day. Fisk and Gould wrested control of the Erie railroad from robber baron Cornelius Vanderbilt; using railroad funds, Fisk corrupted public officials, supported Broadway shows and their starlets, and, again with Gould, attempted to corner the gold market on "Black Friday," 1869. The price of gold jumped tremendously, and dozens of businessmen were ruined. The depression of 1873, caused by wild speculation in the mining, manufacturing, and grain industries, was the severest the nation had yet faced. Five thousand businesses failed, and in New York, mobs of unemployed laborers rioted.

The spirit of the age was not, of course, confined to important personages in government and industry. The nation, no less than Grant (who picked for his cabinet men who had succeeded in amassing large fortunes), seemed to have inordinate respect for men who could make money quickly. Newspaper editors that would condemn a Fisk, for example, would do so with scarcely concealed admiration for his "daring": he was the "Buccaneer of Broadway," and the "Prince of the Erie." Popular fiction painted the life of the entrepreneur in heavily romantic colors. No longer was business looked upon as a somehwat gross affair that could not really interest a gentleman; the new hero was one whose victories were inscribed in a ledger. The buying and selling of votes, however, even more than the heroes in the popular literature of the day, attests to changing American values. Pensions, hard money (gold, favored by the East and creditors in general) versus soft money (silver, favored by the West and debtors in general), and tariffs (favored by industry, opposed by agriculture) were key issues of the national politica platforms. Throughout American history, politicians had relized the importance of making an economic bid for a citizen's vote; but never before did rich kids have the importance they did now. Some pressure groups, the Grand Army of the Republic, for example, were notably successful in compounding the value of the nation's debt to them.

The cry for political reform, which by 1872 had become a significant factor in post-Civil War American politics, is perhaps one of the best evidences of the disillusionment the nation was experiencing. The cry had grown louder by the end of Grant's last term; but even the election of 1876, in which both candidates had reputations as "reformers," was tainted. Charges of fraud were hotly contested, and only an elaborate compromise, involving the withdrawal of troops from the South and an agreement on the "spoils" of political offices, averted what promised to become civil war once more. Political reform was slow to come. By 1884, a slight ten percent of government officeholders were selected by competitive examination; by 1901, less than half of the 256,000 jobs were under civil service; and even by 1920, more than one out of every four civil servants was appointed by the leaders of the party in power.

The nation was somewhat slower in demanding government action against the tremendous power some American industrialists managed to acquire and abuse after the Civil War. American railroads, which were constructed with surprising alacrity immediately after the Civil War and were more responsible than any other single agency for promoting the amazingly rapid industrial development of the nation, were a major target of the reformers. Discrimination in rates and services between one area and another, or between shippers, put so much power into the hands of the railroads that they were able to determine the fate of almost any industry, business, and even city. The trusts, particularly in steel and oil, grew almost as fast as the railroads. The Kelly-Bessemer process for manufacturing steel and the organizing genius of Andrew Carnegie created a Pittsburg steel empire that, by 1900, was producing a fourth of the nation's steel; for almost half a billion dollars, J.P. Morgan, a Wall Street banker, bought Carnegie out and by 1901, thanks to liberally "watered" stock, had created a corporation that was worth more than the total estimated wealth in America in 1800. J.D. Rockefeller created the Standard Oil Company in 1870; using clever and sometimes ruthless business tactics, he forced his competitors to sell to him or go bankrupt. Seven years later, the Standard Oil Company controlled 95% of all oil refineries in the country. Trusts in sugar, tobacco, leather, farm machinery, and meat also arose. All operated upon the principle that the market place was an economic jungle where only the fittest could survive; they showed little mercy either for their competitors or for the American people whose toil built and supported their empires.

Government regulation of the railroads and trusts came rather slowly. One significant reason for this was the curtain of secrecy with which the trusts shrouded their operations or, indeed, their very existence. Another reason was the fact that government regulation of industry had no important precedent in the history of American government.

By 1900, as far as government and industry were concerned, many Americans would see little relation between the present state of the nation and the ideal America about which Jefferson had dreamed and written. Even the shape of American society had changed radically since 1800. In 1790, only 2.8% of the country's population resided in cities numbering more than ten thousand inhabitants; by 1900, almost

32% lived in cities; and by 1920, 42% percent of the American people had chosen a city for their home. But these figures are deceptive, for the population was increasing at an astonishing rate; the American population in 1870, for example, numbered about forty million; by 1900, the figure had almost doubled to a remarkable seventy-six million. Immigration accounted for much of the increase. Between 1850 and 1870, about two hundred thousand aliens had arrived each year. But during the 80's, five million souls immigrated to the United States; between 1901 and 1910, another seven million arrived. The poverty of the immigrants and the unjustly low wages for which American industry forced them to work created crowded, unhealthy cities, one of the very things Jefferson had feared. When the conditions under which most of the immigrants lived in "the land of promise" are considered, it is small wonder that they worked with almost desperate energy to improve their standard of living and insure a better life for their children. Their concern necessarily reinforced the spirit of materialism that seems to have become the hallmark of late 19th and 20th century America. In government and industry, Americans had shown a rapacious desire to "get ahead," no matter what the moral cost.

"The Gilded Age," as Mark Twin called it, destroyed the classical idealism that had guided an earlier America. The nation was no longer to be thought of as a republic whose destiny was guided by landed farmers holding 18th century views of man and society. America had become sprawling, industrial, mindful of empire and in the process of this "becoming," Americans had seen how potent a force in their society was the human love of money and power. As the old idealism died, they saw a new one take its place. The success or failure of human life, the new materialistic idealism seemed to say, depended upon "the good life" a man or woman might enjoy. The riches that poured forth from American mines, farms and factories promised comfort, security, even happiness. If one worked hard enough, and were lucky, he too could share in the American promise. And, after all, what more could a man want from life?

B. Affluent America (1917-)

The advent of World War I united America into a spirit of unity and enthusiasm that, at least temporarily, awakened a selfless patriotism in the heart of the nation's people. Party loyalty was affilated with the national interest, business leaders went to Washington as "dollar-a-year men," and the nation as a whole mobilized to fight "a war to end war" and "make the world safe for democracy." In the minds of many Americans, however, the victory the nation purchased with forty-nine thousand lives and twenty-two billion dollars was betrayed by the peace. President Wilson's earlier appeals, while they had put a sword of righteousness into the hands of the American people, had degenerated--or so many thought--into dubious proposals for a League of Nations. What was worse, the Allies, in the light of the Versailles Peace Conference and afterwards, proved vindictive, petty, and--what was perhaps most unforgivable--unwilling to repay the loans the United States had made to them during the War and during the period of reconstruction. Americans had fought for a principle, and they had supposed their allies had too; but by 1922, with the allies unwilling to repay their ten billion at 5% interest rate, the feeling became widespread that principle had been reduced to dollars and cents. Was this gratitude on the part of the nations America had saved? Europeans, of course, took a different view of the matter: they could not understand why, when they had borne the major burden of the war, their Ally should demand repayment.

With the end of industrial demobilization in 1920, American business began a boom which would last until October 29, 1929, when the stock market thundered down catastrophically. Until "Black Tuesday," however, the nation enjoyed feverish rounds ofever more speculative business activity. The stock market, where one could supposedly get rich almost without effort, was particularly popular, not only with large investors, but with small investors as well. Stocks could be bought "on margin"--that is, for only a small down payment. Popular magazines and newspapers fondly carried stories of barbers, clerks, servants, and housewives who had made a fortune literally overnight, usually on the basis of "a hot tip." Speculative crazes swept the country, and new companies sprang up or "foundered" almost overnight. One such craze, a speculation in Florida real estate, particularly caught the imagination of the country--until, in 1926, a hurricane from the West Indies blew both Florida and the Florida investment market apart.

Thanks to American industry, the living habits of Americans probably changed more profoundly in the 'twenties than they had in any previous decade. The introduction of the automobile into the family carriage house was, perhaps more than any other single factor, responsible for this change. In 1910, sixty-nine American companies produced about two hundred thousand vehicles annually. By 1914, however, Henry Ford had sold his five hundred thousandth Model T because of his techniques of assembly line production, "Fordism,"as it was called; the sturdy "Tin Lizzie's" $260 price tag put it within reach of America's expanding middle class. By 1929, Americans owned more than twenty-six million motor vehicles. The automobile destroyed many industries, but it created new and larger ones to replace them: business in oil, rubber, and glass boomed, as did industries which helped to meet the demand for a vastly improved system of roads. American cities now began to sprawl into the surrounding countryside, where one could enjoy all the advantages of the country and yet, thanks to the automobile, commute to his office each morning. The automobile even improved the national diet: more and more perishable foodstuffs began to appear in neighborhood stores.

But, as American business men quickly realized, an expanding industrial machine demanded an expanded market. Part of the need for a larger market was met by sending more investment dollars and goods abroad than ever before in the nation's history; before the market crashed, in fact, more than ten billion dollars of the nation's capital had been invested in foreign industry. But by far the largest part of the expanded market was developed in the United States. "Installment buying," an instant success with the American public, was one significant method by which the market was developed. Another, even more important, reason for the expansion of the American market was the use of advertising. Before 1890, newspapers and magazines had contained little more than formal announcements of goods for sale and the address at which they might be purchased. By the 1920's, however, newspapers and magazines were attempting to inspire their readers with a wish to buy a particular product. It was the automobile manufacturers who first seemed to realize the promise of advertising: for a few dollars, or a few hundred dollars, they could reach an astonishingly large number of potential customers for a product costing as much as two thousand dollars. The promise of advertising paid off handsomely; in a quarter of a century, the country had bought more than thirty-five million of the massively advertised automobiles. Other industries were quick to catch on; businessmen sensed that an enormous share of the market of any particular product would go to the competing brand name which first impressed itself on the public consciousness. But what of the reader? Certainly, it seems probable that, as Americans turned the pages of their favorite newspaper and magazines, it became easier and easier to admire--and to want --the material riches American business was putting within their reach.

A consequence of the increased demand for advertising space created broadened opportunity for periodicals and newspapers. Publishing was no longer an economicall risky public service; more and more, it became a profitable industry. A consequence of the increased opportunity, however, was an arrangement by which, directly or indirectly and in one degree or another, American business became the patron, subject matter, and guiding spirit of the press. The principle task of the newspapers and magazines was to stimulate the consumption of commodities; reading matter was thought of as a "frame" for the advertising. Writers commonly accommodate their stories and articles to the advanced thinking of their publishers and editors. The use, or abuse, of popular literature became so obvious that Upton Sinclair, in The Brass Check, termed magazine literature "the prostitute of business." Not many successful writers sided with him; after all, a novel serialized in one of the popular periodicals of the '20's earned twenty times more income for the author than it would have if he had published it as a book. A good many popular American writers, in fact, earned their living by singing the praises of the nation's busines Their stories pictured the manager as a kind of hero, as honest, brilliant fellow who pursues production and sales quotas with a religious fervor. It is, however, the critics of early 20th century America who have survived; the great mass of of periodical literature, which so blatantly acclaimed a new era, has been swept into oblivion.

So great an impact did advertising have on American life that it changed even some of our language. The word "sell" is a good example of the temper of the times. In the 1929 edition of Webster's Dictionary, "sell" still was defined as the transfer of good for a price. But in popular practice, "sell" meant to create a demand or an impression; thus, you could "sell" a man an idea by convincing him of something or other. Christ's command to "Go, sell what thou hast and give it to the poor " was actually interpreted as "Go, advertise the Christian message to the heathen and give it to the poor." Not only did such common words as "sell" place an increasing emphasis on the material aspect of men's lives, but a good deal more slang, all of it denoting the properly inexpressible qualities of a product, entere the American language.

Another example of the increasing spirit of materialism in the America of the 1920's was the great popularity of Omar Khayyam, as adapted by Fitzgerald.

who expressed a kind of epicurean fatalism with the charm of poetic language. The middle class, particularly, seemed to appreciate Omar, and Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat could often be found, side by side with the Bible, in a prominent place in the home book case. The philosophy of the Rubaiyat that man should live, not for God, but for the sensual pleasure he can experience, and Biblical morality were, however, hardly compatible.

> Come fill the cup, and in the fire of Spring
> Your winter garment of repentance fling;
> The Bird of Time has but a little way
> To flutter--and the bird is on the wing.

The Old Testament promise--that there is a future life, that the dead shall rise and possess life everlasting--is denied by Fitzgerald:

> Ah, make the most of what we yet may spend,
> Before we too into the dust descend;
> Dust into Dust, and under Dust to lie
> Sans wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and sans End.

The carpe diem of the Rubaiyat is, indeed, not contradictory to the moral views of the universe taken by Gatsby, Babbit, and the frustrated individuals in The Waste Land. But it is a far cry from the unmaterialistic injunctions implicit in The Scarlet Letter, for example, or in Paradise Lost, both of which were the favored reading of earlier generations of Americans.

Business not only advertised its products, but it advertised itself. Perhaps the businessman had an "inferiority complex," to use a term that came into much favor in the 1920's; if he wasn't commonly considered a "sharper" or a "cut-throat," exactly, he had not commonly been thought of as a member of a profession. During the '20's, however, the "public image" of the businessman changed radically, and to be termed a "businessman" was felt praise indeed. Even a clergyman was "good" if, in the opinion of his congregation, he "sold" religion well and could "manage" the affairs of his church. One churchman became such a good businessman, in fact, that he offered "an engraved certificate of investment in preferred capital stock in the Kingdom of God" to anyone who would contribute substantially to a building fund for a new church. Another, by no means atypical, was so convinced of the power of advertising that he had the statement "Christian worship increases your efficiency" printed on the billboard outside his church. Nor was religion alone in being turned into a business. College alumni, gathered at annual banquets, would warmly applaud the speaker--typically a businessman--who called education a great American industry and compared the dean to a business executive. Often inspired by donations from successful businessmen, American colleges began organizing business courses and even business schools; they cheerfully granted degrees in the arts and sciences to candidates who had mastered the mysteries of newspaper advertising, drug store practice, inventory control, and so forth. Even Harvard and Yale, institutions that had originally been set apart for the training of theologians who would serve a church that dogmatically divorced itself from the marketplace, became supporters of the American business machine. These schools began to graduate technicians who had spent their time in studies which, although contributing to the students' ability to make money, did perhaps less to develop them as researchers and thinkers than the more traditional liberal disciplines.

One of the ways in which business "sold" itself to the public was to present the businessman as "the new man" of the new American society. No longer was the businessman a merchant who used ruthless, cut-throat tactics to bankrupt his competitor and, if possible, defraud the public. Julius Klein, a member of the Hoover administration, spoke for the new man when he said that there was "an amazing transformation in the soul of business"; business, he claimed, had suddenly become a thing of high morality. Supposedly the essence of business was not "the profit motive "" but a social and spiritual concern to serve the temporal needs of society. It was not individualistic and materialistic any longer; somehow, while retaining the spur of profit without which any civilization would collapse, business had become an idealistic Quixote--rising to feed, clothe, and shelter its neighbor. The new faith permeated the churches, the courts, the colleges, and, of course, the press. Factories became temples, according to the new myth, and work the worship. The manager was the priest, his commandment Service, the custom of gathering at the local Kiwanis or Rotary club was a ritual, replete with the collective chanting of cheerful songs. Bruce Barton, a New York advertising man, even admitted Jesus Christ into the new cult by presenting Him as the ideal executive. Christ, according to Barton, was not a failure because "He picked up twelve men from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world." In the preface to The Man Nobody Knows, he hopefully asks that "Every business man will read it and send it to his partners and his salesmen. For it will tell the story of the founder of modern business."

Although business seemed the real religion of the nation, church membership increased in the years after the War, particularly during the '20's. It seems probable, however, that at least part of the increase was due to the prestige middle class society attached to church membership. Religious fundamentalism, which had been the religious backbone of Protestant America since the Second Great Awakening in 1800, had lost ground to churches whose doctrines seemed both less demanding and more in step with the discoveries of science. Fundamentalists charged, probably correctly, that Science in general, and Darwinism in particular, was destroying faith in God and Bible. Bring God and the Bible back into American life, they argued, and the moral breakdown of "Jazz Age" youth would end. They made numerous attempts to promote the passage of laws which would have prohibited the teaching of evolution in state public schools. In Tennessee and two other Southern states, Fundamentalists succeeded in getting an anti-evolutionist bill through the legislature. In 1925, at Dayton, Tennessee, John T. Scopes, a high school biology teacher, was indicted under the terms of this law; newspapermen turned the trial into a national spectacle in which "yokel" religion was pitted against the infallibility of science. William Jennings Bryan, twice a candidate for the Presidency and a staunch fundamentalist, helped prosecute the case; but he unwisely took the witness stand as an expert on the Bible and was made to look pretty inept before the court by Scopes' clever defense attorneys. Scopes was finally convicted, but the press convinced the nation that "Science" had, after all, really won the more significant moral victory. Five days after the trial ended, with the scornful laughter of a people whom he had served so well still ringing in his ears, Bryan died of apoplexy. But his warning that the American people might find themselves crucified on a cross of gold was perhaps truer in 1925 than it was in 1896, when he had first said it.

Another aspect of the businessman was his indispensability. Business had built America into the most powerful nation on earth, the public was told, and, should anything happen to business, America would undoubtedly dissolve into anarchy. "Without these great minds," observed a business writer, "the multitudes would eat their heads off, and, as history proves, would lapse into barbarism . . . . The masses are the beneficiaries, the few, the benefactors."

The ideals of the businessman might be believed in, but putting them into practice was another matter. Even the most respected prophets of the religion of business had their small failings. Henry Ford, for example, might say that the fundamentals of business "are all summed up in the single word 'service,'" but he still carried a gun and spent a fortune propagating belief in reincarnation and promoting a hatred of bankers, doctors, Catholics, fat men, liquor, tobacco, prisons, capital punishment, and --especially-- Jews. Nor was Ford unique. The America of the 20's was rocked by a series of scandals involving big business. The most notorious of these was the Teapot Dome Scandal. Senator Warren G. Harding, selected by a group of Senate bosses loyal to American industry as the Republican party candidate, was advised by the Senate clique on the "right" men for his cabinet. He had the misfortune to name Albert B. Fall, an ex-senator from New Mexico, Secretary of the Interior. Harry M. Daugherty, a crooked small-town lawyer, was appointed Attorney General. Certain courts and administrative bureaus, especially those having jurisdiction according to the terms of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act and Federal Trade Law, were put into the hands of men who could be expected to prove friendly to big business. In 1923, Colonel Charles R. Forbes, a Harding appointee who had once deserted from the army, resigned as head of the Veterans' Bureau after it was found that he and his friends had stolen a quarter of a million dollars from funds allocated to build veterans' hospitals. In March, 1923, it was found that Fall had managed secretly to transfer valuable oil properties in Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to the Department of the Interior. He then leased these lands to certain oilmen who, in return, "loaned" him $125,000. In 1924, Fall and his friends were indicted; the case dragged on until 1929 when, finally, Fall was convicted of taking a bribe and sentenced. There were other scandals, too. In 1924, Attorney General Daugherty was under investigation by the Senate for the illegal sale of pardons and liquor permits. He was forced to resign and, in 1927, brought to trial. Not since the administration of Grant had so much dishonesty prevailed in American government.

Not all businessmen, of course, had the moral character of a Fall or a Daugherty. But, as scandal after scandal revealed the extent of the corruption in business and government, many Americans wondered if, indeed, the values of the nation's people had not radically changed. Were Fall and Daugherty exceptions, they wondered, or were they examples of a new American morality, an ethic which made the profit motive supreme over every other consideration. To some extent, it would appear, Fall and Daugherty were not all that unique. American businessmen might talk of the moral responsibility of business at their country clubs, they might speak eloquently of "service" at a church meeting, or at the Rotary meeting on Thursday afternoon; on the golf-course or in the locker room he might earnestly curse farmers, workers, foreigners, and intellectuals. But he, and the American public as a whole, admired the "sharper," the man who could get the "jump" on his competitors or his buyers, even if his methods were a bit "shady."

Public morality declined or seemed to the period to decline, during the '20's in other areas of the national life besides business and government. Such a decline almost invariably follows every war, but in "the Jazz Age" or "The Roaring Twenties," as the decade was called, it was an emphatic one. The disillusioned idealism of the post-war years became a cynicism: "Oh, yeah?" was a tremendously popular answer for almost anything. Shockingly bobbed hair and dresses, one-piece bathing suits, jazz from the Negro quarter of New Orleans, the gin-filled hip flask, the roadster and the roadhouse became the romantic hallmarks of the age. Premarital sex, "necking," and "petting," if perhaps not extensively practiced by American youth, were extensively and flippantly preached. Guardians of public morality, possibly remembering the days when a kiss was almost a proposal of marriage and few "decent" women cut their hair short, called automobiles "houses of prostitution on wheels."

The twenties were also the golden age of gangsterism. The eighteenth Amendment, aided by the Volstead Act, turned America from a "wet" to a "dry" nation overnight; at that point, smuggling from Canada and the West Indies became extremely profitable, as did the operation of bootleg refineries. The competition between rival gangs of racketeers to monopolize the market in certain sections of the country led to mayhem; in Chicago alone, five hundred gangland members met violent death during the decade. Al Capone, who in six bloody years made millions, became something of a popular hero as he zoomed through the streets of Chicago in an armor-plated car with bullet-proof windows. He, and others like him, soon branched into diverse fields of criminal activities, especially prostitution, gambling, and narcotics. By 1930, the underworld was the biggest business in America, making an estimated profit of about eighteen billion dollars a year. And, like any big business, its payroll was a large one, extending from the cop on the beat who "looked the other way," to the ruthless heads of criminal empires, to men who managed legitimate businesses as "fronts" for the gangland lords.

As business profits, skirts, and criminal activity rose during the '20's, individualism seemed to decline. During World War I and the period that immediately followed it, the nonconformist found himself roughly treated by American society as a whole; unlike an earlier America which had more or less tolerated the protests of a Henry Thoreau, the nation could not ignore dissent. During the war, a great deal of pressure was applied to traditionally pacific groups, such as Quakers and Mennonites. There was considerable prejudice--even riots--against Americans of German ancestry. In June, 1921, an Espionage Act was passed which provided penalties for those who attempted to obstruct the draft. Earlier, in 1918, a Sedition Act had made it a criminal matter to disparage the flag, the Constitution, the government, a soldier's uniform, or the sale of war bonds. About two thousand people had been arrested under the Act, and three-fourths of that number brought to trial. The great "Red Scare" occurred in 1919-20 when it was feared that the Bolsheviks who had seized power in Russia meant to take over the United States. Consequently, radicals, anarchists, and communists were seen everywhere. A strike in Seattle was thought to have been inspired by radicals, for example, when the mayor of the city found a bomb in his mail. When a Georgia Senator also received a bomb in the mail, it was evidence that the radical invasion was spreading. The peak of national hysteria was reached, however, when the Washington residence of the Attorney General was bombed. The Attorney General, A. Mitchell Palmer, rounded up six thousand suspects; 249 of the suspects were aliens and, placed without benefit of an honest trial aboard the Buford, which was jeeringly called "the Soviet ark." Palmer's continued announcements that the country was still in danger created further panic. The Industrial Workers of the World (I.W.W.) organization became an especial target of public hysteria. In 1920, the New York legislature denied seats to five Socialists who had been lawfully elected. Victor Berger of Wisconsin was excluded from the House of Representatives at the same time. In 1921, Nicola Sacco and Bartholomeo Venzetti were convicted of murder and executed six years later; but it is at least probable that they were really tried for draft-dodging, atheism, and anarchism. Seventeen states passed repressive legislation aimed at the I.W.W., which was viciously used against labor in general by big business. Other states passed sedition acts--making it criminal to advocate the overthrow of a federal or state government--and "red flag" acts--a law forbidding the use of a red flag as a political symbol. Such laws were unfortunately upheld when they were tested in the Supreme Court. The early '20's also heralded the second rise of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan preached hatred against Negroes, foreigners, Catholics, Jews, pacifists, communists, evolutionists, internationalists, bootleggers, and birth-control. It was for "white" men, for "native" Americans, and for fundamentalist religion. A great many of its supporters were Southerners, usually "White trash"; but Klan brutality in Northern cities, and the control of state legislatures as far West as Colorado, proved that it was by no means confined to the South. Absurdly ritualistic, semi-secret, and devoted to murdering, wounding, and terrorizing the "enemies" of the Republic into submission, the Klan had the allegiance of more than five million members at the peak of its popularity. When a Congressional investigation revealed that the Klan was less a religious and patriotic movement than a racket for Klan leaders, who collected a ten dollar initiation fee and monthly dues from the membership, the society declined, for a time, almost as fast as it had sprung up. Yet, its existence showed how lightly millions and millions of Americans--both those who belonged to the Klan and those who tolerated it--valued the civil liberties of their fellow Americans.

Besides the "Red Scare" and the Ku Klux Klan there were other, even more important, influences at work which compromised individualism in America. During the '20's and '30's Americans became more conscious of social prestige than ever before in the nation's history. Advertising, at least in part, was responsible for this phenomenon. Newspapers, magazines, the radio, and the movie screen all insisted that an individual's bank account, learning, taste, and general appearance could be determined by the type of car he drove, the factory label on clothes he wore, the brand of cigarettes he smoked, and so forth. The advertiser, in effect, argued that a man or woman could be judged by what he owned. He also implied that self-respect depended upon the possession of certain types of material goods. The phenomenon is, of course, still very much with us. The typical, almost the only, technique used today is founded on the premise that a man *is* what he owns. So status-conscious has the nation become that certain goods are sold *only* because they confer prestige, not because they are in any way useful. Antiques, particularly early American items, are a good example of goods purchased for their prestige value. To have a home full of genuine early American is almost as respectable as belonging to a prestige club. To have a home full of genuine early American is almost as respectable as belonging to a prestige-family society such as the Colonial Dames, Daughters of the American Revolution, First Families of Virginia, and so forth. According to Vance Packard's *The Status Seekers*, in one community huge television aerials have become symbols of personal worth and importance. Some of these aerials are more than fifty feet high, a few are twin towered, and a great number of them cost considerably more than the television set which they serve. In another instance of prestige consciousness, a company forces its executives to drive certain types of cars. A sales supervisor is confined to Ford, Chevrolet, or Plymouth, an assistant sales manager may drive a Pontiac, Dodge, or Mercury, and a division manager receives a Lincoln or less expensive Cadillac for his use. The vice-president and president may have any type of Cadillac they wish. An employee who diverges from this policy is considered eccentric and, therefore, not favored for promotion. *The Organization Man* documents the extent to which American business, using prestige as a motive, dominates the lives of its executives.

American Materialism: The Protest

The examination of the possible ideological and historical roots of American materialism does not, of course, pretend to be a complete explanation for 20th Century American society. The worst aspect of the nation's past has been looked at, not the best side. It would be a mistake to believe that the last century of American life has been dominated by greed, corruption, and disillusion. In industry, government, the arts, and the professions, Americans have made great and honorable achievements for which America, and the world as a whole, will be lastingly grateful. But it would be as bad, if not a worse, mistake to ignore the critics of modern American society. If their criticism is bitter, it may be because their faith in the ability of American society is a profound one. If their criticism is at least considered, it may eventually help to provoke measures which will lessen or correct the failures and shortcomings of our society. The function of satire is to remind us of shortcomings.

IV. Sinclair Lewis: The Man and the Vision

Lewis was born in 1885, in Sauk Centre, Minnesota; he died sixty-six years later in 1951, having established a reputation as a major American author and social critic. The son of a doctor, Lewis was an optimistic and energetic boy, forever interested in some project for self-improvement; during his high school years, for example, he valiantly chopped wood and practiced running in order to overcome a gangling and ungainly appearance that, despite his efforts, was characteristic of him even after he had reached manhood. He felt that he had more difficulty than most people in winning friends, and--from boyhood to old age--would often seek attention by behaving extravagantly. He spent much of his time at college in the Yale library, reading almost anything that came to hand; he also studied foreign languages intensively, particularly German, Greek, and Hebrew. But he could never seem to remain with these intellectual projects long enough to become a good scholar. In his junior year at Yale he began a diary. He also contributed to the Yale Literary Magazine; in fact, he was the first in his class to have anything printed there. Although he failed to realize his hopes to become a varsity debater, win a scholarship, make Phi Beta Kappa, etc., he did become a member of the editorial board of the Literary Magazine. This was certainly not because of his popularity: election was automatic because of the number of his successful submissions to the Magazine.

During the summers of 1904 and 1906, following his freshman and junior years, he sought adventure by working his way to England on cattle boats. The summer of his sophomore year he spent working on a novel called The Village Virus. Much revised, the book was published fifteen years later as Main Street; it depicted the Midwest as a land of dull, ignorant, and bigoted people whose culture militated against any but the most orthodox and intellectually superficial opinions and ideals. Instead of returning to Yale for his fourth year, Lewis lived for a few months in a socialistic colony in New Jersey, and then migrated to New York where he lodged in a slum and spent his time writing sentimental verse. The romance of poverty did not last for long, however, and he soon bought a steerage ticket to Panama. He returned to Yale to finish his work in 1908. He now thought of doing graduate work for a doctorate in English; but his love of travel was too great. He became editor of a paper in Waterloo, Iowa, a charity worker in New York, a reporter in San Francisco, and in Washington, D.C., an editor for a magazine for teachers of the deaf. He gradually gave up writing verse, deciding that his talent lay in fiction if, indeed, he had any talent at all. His hopes in this direction rose when, meeting Jack London in California, he found that London would buy short-story plots from him; between 1910 and 1911, he sold London at least twenty-six such plots. His work for London indicates that, more and more, Lewis was becoming conscious of a socially-disharmonious America. One of his plots, for example, contrasts the restrictive East against the opportunistic West. Another compares the formal education ofan effete Academy with the practical education one might receive on the open road. Lewis considered the East, with its formality and superficial culture, as substantially inferior to the vigorous, earnest West; but he identified himself as the son of the Midwest, a region which,because the cultural polarity of the West was equalized by the cultural polarity of the East, had become a kind of intellectual and spiritual vacuum.

After a few more years of drifting from one job to another, Lewis settled for five years in New York where, for sixty dollars a week, he edited a syndicated book review page for the Sunday papers. During this period, he also wrote four novels based in part on his experiences. But, although they served to develop his satirical techniques they did not earn him much money or acclaim. He gave up this lucrative enterprise in 1915. For the next five years he wandered about the East, Southeast, and Midwest; he supported himself quite well, in fact, by writing stories. He stayed long enough in Washington to write Main Street. It was very well received and he found himself, at 35, suddenly recognized as a man who could accurately and boldly tell Americans what was right and what wrong with their society.

Lewis' short stories and his first four novels--Our Mr. Wrenn, The Job, The Trail of the Hawk, and Free Air--typically depict American society as a dull, tedious affair. The narratives satirically attack the America of high-pressure salesmanship, quack religion, women's suffrage, automobiles, patent medicines, journalism (especially business journalism), and so forth--in short, the fast-buck America of the "booster," the crook, and the businessman. American life, Lewis claims, is spiritually empty because it does not give a man or woman the chance to achieve anything honestly worthwhile and significant. In Our Mr. Wrenn, the chief character decides to escape his deadly routine; leaving job and family, he goes to England on a cattleboat, but after a series of small adventures he finds that he has escaped into the cruelty and, especially, the loneliness of a world that doesn't care a great deal about what happens to him. He returns to the security of America, a job, a home, and a wife, but he refuses to face the fact that this bondage is the price one must pay for his comforts. At issue in Our Mr. Wrenn, and in all of Lewis' best novels, is a conflict between the romance a man wants his life to be and the realistic world he must, in fact, face every morning. Much of this "realistic world" disgusts Lewis, who takes care that it should disgust his readers, too; but, at the same time, he takes a patronizing, somewhat mocking, and at times sentimentalized view of the romantic aspirations of his characters. Thus, Lewis is neither a romantic nor a realist. He is continually playing one off against the other and impressing his readers with the belief that this situation is, indeed, the dilemma of American life. In one paragraph, he may sympathize with the frustration of an individual who sees his existence as a kind of "rat race"; but in the next, he may poke fun at the same individual's stumbling effort to learn to play the piano or read a good book.

In Main Street, Lewis broke with established American literary tradition, which has depicted the small town as the cradle of virtue of every kind, by describing the hopeless situation of an intelligent and idealistic young woman who begins married life in the small, smug, timorous community of Gopher Prairie. The town finally defeats her best efforts to change it, but Carol Kennicott is, nevertheless, clearly the moral victor. Her discontent has been a virtue, not--as the town elders suppose--a madness. Echoing the theme of Van Wyck Brooks' "The Puritan's Will to Power" and H.L. Mencken's "Puritanism as a Literary Force," essays both published in 1917, Lewis believed that decayed Puritanism had rooted itself deeply into the soil of American society. Such Puritanism, he seemed to think, included a prejudice against beauty, regarding it as a form of debauchery and corruption; it included a distrust of any but the most conventional ideas, a belief in the eternal validity of certain moral concepts, and--in brief--an intellectual sluggishness.

Lewis' assault on American culture in Main Street was quickly imitated by writers both good and bad, who found that social criticism not only was tolerated, but actually applauded by the reading public. Religion, industry, education, science, and the arts were all spattered with literary grapeshot. The target was always provincialism and fundamentalist attitudes. Babbitt, Lewis' next book, did even better than Main Street which, according to publisher's estimates, had reached two million readers; so great was the anticipation of the American reading public for Babbitt that the book's pre-publication printing alone was more than 80,000 copies. Those who bought the novel were not disappointed. The reviewers were especially kind. Some of them adopted Lewis' viewpoint absolutely; as Anne O'Hara McCormick wrote: "What makes Zenith so comic is that it has been sold more equipment for civilization (by Babbitts) than anyone in the world ever owned, just at the moment when it is perfectly plain that here is no civilization for the equipment."

Still, many readers, both then and now, find that Lewis offers no solution to the problems he presents. He does not say,--not in Main Street, or Babbitt, or most of his later novels--how one escapes from Gopher Prairie or Zenith. Mr. Wrenn's answer, to run away, is not at all satisfactory: Wrenn, and most of Lewis' notable characters must, it seems, return because they somehow belong to their society and their region, no matter how wretched it may now and then appear to them. America, in Lewis' vision, is a land of the damned, home of a people without spiritual gifts, one whose culture--boasting and optimistic--leads only toward ever more complete intellectual death.

V. Babbitt

Babbitt can best be understood as a Menippean satire using the mode of the "human fable" but a fable almost like reality (cf. 9th and 12th grade satire units) --a fable which mocks the materialism, the worship of business and success, the worship of provincial barbarism and American ostentation, which we have described as part of post-World War I America. Throughout his novel, Lewis' fable leads his readers from romance to reality, from seeming beauty to ugliness. This becomes apparent in the first paragraph of Babbitt: the distantly-viewed towers of Zenith rise above the morning mist. They might have been citadels or churches, but these "austere towers of steel and cement and limestone, sturdy as cliffs and delicate as silver rods. . ."are "frankly and beautifully office-buildings." That office buildings should be frank and beautiful, that the name of the town is "Zenith;" and that the towers "aspire" are satirical devices that undermine any tendency the reader may have to take the illusion at face value in the next few paragraphs, the real Zenith--with its old Post Office, its collapsing houses, dirty factories, and beautiful suburbs of "shining new houses,"("homes--they seemed--for laughter and tranquillity")--appears. Some of Zenith's inhabitants may live in a world of romance, may speed along in limousines that return them "from an all-night rehearsal of a Little Theater play, an artistic adventure considerably illuminated by champagne." But many more--telegraph men, scrubwomen, factory workers--are either tiredly coming home or standing in queues awaiting the beginning of work. For them, life is not so patently a romantic holiday. The fable, by juxtaposing "illusion" and "reality," calls attention to the faults in the holiday vision.

George F. Babbitt, prosperous, forty-six years old, and fattened on the good life the previous years have afforded, a real estate salesman, is Zenith writ small. He has his unromantic side: he lives in an ordinary suburban house with a cement drive, an iron garage, and two elm trees in his yard. But he has visions of something infinitely better than all this: in his romantic dreams, he is gallant, young, escaping into mysterious groves where his wife could not follow him, there to meet a fairy child, "fleet beside him . . . so slim, so white, so eager!" Like the business-building towers men of his type have erected he is austere, sturdy, and delicate. He sleeps on the porch and likes his rough blanket, which symbolizes the Thoreauesque "freedom and heroism" of the outdoor man, but he is also a delicate man who is infuriated by a wet and wrinkled bath-mat, at the condition of his razor blades, and at the disorder he discovers in his medicine cabinet.

Though Babbitt might lie abed and consider how greatly he "detested the grind of the real estate business . . . , " he loves the things it brings him. As he shaves and dresses, he continually pays homage to the ingenuity and fertility of American science and business. He marvels at the tub, the toothbrush holder, the soap dish, sponge dish, and medicine cabinet; as he puts on his underwear he does so "thanking the God of Progress" that it fits and feels so well; and when he looks out the window and sees the great Second National Bank Tower, his homage approaches a fanatic's worship. "He beheld the tower as a temple spire of the religion of business, a faith passionate, exalted, surpassing common men; and as he clumped down to breakfast he whistled the ballad 'Oh, by gee, by gosh, by jingo' as though it were a hymn melancholy and noble." Babbitt's position and allegiance to America the Prosperous are clearly indicated by the symbolic tokens he wears or puts into his pockets: his suit establishes him in the public eye as something other than "busted bookkeeper," while his fountain pen, useless silver pencil, watch-chain, penknife, cigar cutter, keys, gold watch, Elk's tooth, pocket note-book, and so forth all have a certain social significance without which he feels naked. Thus, Babbitt not only loves material goods for their own sake, but for the man into which they make him before he steps out of the door on a working day. Yet, despite his ritualistic devotion to dressing correctly for the day, Babbitt comforts himself with the belief that he is not a snob because he dislikes "soup and fish" clothes (a tuxedo) preferring "re'lar ordinary clothes."

Babbitt dislikes his wife and family for a number of reasons that he cannot clearly define to himself and that, because he is mildly ashamed of disliking them, he does not attempt clearly to define. For one thing, they interfere with his material comfort and his way of doing things: "They" leave the bath mat wet in the morning, for example, or put the bicarbonate of soda in the wrong place, or feed him too much lunch, or will not leave his evenings in peace, and so on. They also disagree with him, which interferes with the spiritual comfort he draws from opinions and tastes he supposes are his own, but which he actually obtains from the Republican party campaign literature, Kiwanis Club speakers, popular magazines, and a variety of other, similar sources. Finally, they threaten him: Verona's new ideas, especially her affection for charitable enterprises which "are" the "entering wedge for socialism," may ruin his reputation in the community and thus his business; the fact that Ted may not get into college could also be a social catastrophe (not only for Ted but also for his father). And Ted's desire for a car of his own is a threat to his bank account.

Babbitt expects his children to respect him, obey him, and provide in every way for his material and spiritual comfort, because --after all--he has given them so much that they owe him a good deal of gratitude. "What's the use of giving the family a high-class house he wonders, as he sits at his breakfast table, when they don't appreciate it and tend to business and get down to brass tacks." Yet Babbitt's image is faithfully reflected in his wife and children. No less than his father, Ted practices a ritual of dress that establishes him among his peers. And Verona's social opinions, though different from Babbitt's, are venerated because she thinks them original, helpful, and socially acceptable. Myra Babbitt best reflects the stodgy side of her husband: her beauty has gone, even her desire to be beautiful has gone. She is fat and rather complacent, so "dully habituated to married life that in her full matronliness she [is] as sexless as an anemic nun." But she is also a tragic figure, as any woman must be who realizes that "no one . . . [is] at all interested in her or entirely aware that she [is] alive." Babbitt takes much the same attitude toward his employees as he does toward his family. He takes no interest in them, cannot even imagine they have a life outside of their working hours, and considers himself their feudal lord: he walks into his office "as one of the squirearchy, greeted with honorable salutations by the villagers . . . ." He hates them in a small way. He classifies everyone but his pretty secretary as "all those bums." When Stan Graff asks him for a raise, he argues against the merit and need for the increase with double-talk involving "matters of principles " and Vision and Ideals. Actually, it is Stan's assault on Babbitt's "sacred purse" that has frightened him into furious oratory. He comforts himself, however, with the belief that he has "got to haul folks over the coals now and then for their own good."

When Babbitt goes to meet Paul Riesling for lunch at the Zenith Athletic Club, which is only a bit less prestigious than the Union Club, the scene is, on the surface at least, one of joyous conformity among the business community. Babbitt's sense of humor, political opinions, love of machinery, and delight in the club's luxurious bath fixtures is shared by his peers. But with Paul, Babbitt lets down his guard; for the first time in the novel, he seems less a "type" and more an individual. Up to this point, he has been a Menippean human-fable--an animation of an advertisement for the American way. Now he becomes a "character" rather than a "mirror" for characters. What he would never tell anyone else he tells Paul. He confesses to his friend, the only real friend the lonely Babbitt has in the world, that he has "felt kind of down in the mouth all day long." He has everything he wants--from a good conscience to a nice house, nice car, good golf game, and friendly associates--but something is lacking: "I'm not entirely satisfied." Babbitt's protest is, in fact, pathetic. It is not in rebellion, if only because Babbitt can find nothing to rebel against. To be sure, Lewis has portrayed him as a stupid man, one whose greed for, and love of, material things has partly destroyed him as a human being. But he does not depict Babbitt as a particularly malicious man. Many of Babbitt's sins stem from ignorance. He reacts in this or that way because he is following the teaching of his society, which is the only moral guide that he has ever had. Babbitt as a victim of his environment, not a master, is a tragic figure not a fixture in a satirist's fable; at least, he invites the reader's sympathy.

Babbitt's loyalty to Paul, a loyalty he believes is stronger than his loyalty to the Bunch and all they represent, is but one of Babbitt's good qualities. Once in his life he showed himself capable of self sacrifice: when he gave up the study of the law and married Myra, more out of pity than love. He works hard at the job he has. And he obediently follows the path society has told him to follow. He is not, obviously, a man without virtue. It is his society--made up of thousands of other Babbitts--that lacks goodness, for it corrupts rather than perfects him.

As Babbitt prepares for bed one evening, he finds a hole in his bath towel. It flaws his comfort. He is not quite in paradise. It is symbolic of the emptiness he has uneasily detected in his existence and of the emptiness Paul Reisling has detected in his. But, because he has so totally accepted his world, there is small chance he can ever divorce himself from it: "Just as he was an Elk, a Booster, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, just as the priests of the Presbyterian Church determined his every religious belief and the senators who controlled the Republican Party decided in little smoky rooms in Washington what he should think about disarmament, tariff, and Germany, so did the large national advertisers fix the surface of his life, fix what he believed to be his individuality. These standard advertised wares--toothpastes, socks, tires, cameras, instantaneous hot-water heaters were his symbols and proofs of excellence; at first the signs, then the substitutes, for joy and passion and wisdom."

In parts iv, v, and vi of chapter seven, Lewis examines other parts of the city; his panorama takes in members of all Zenith's social classes. He finds ignorance and corruption almost everywhere, from the "price per soul" evangelism of Mike Monday to the dishonest alliance between Jake Offutt, politician, and Henry T. Thompson, businessman and Babbitt's father-in-law. Some of these men--Doane, Offutt, Thompson, Monday, the cocaine runner, the Union officials--belong to Zenith, the town Babbitt ironically considers more or less his own; yet Babbitt knows nothing at all, or only very dimly, of their existence. He is too involved with the Kiwanis Club, with swindling small grocers, with his home and car and family to realize just who manages Zenith. Doane's ideas, Offutt's connections, Thompson's money, Monday's propaganda, the runner's racket, and the union official's power are all shaping forces in a society that Babbitt believes is more or less static. These shaping forces may be blind in some ways--as Doane, for example, is blind to the difference between the spiritual standardization of America and the standardization of manners in Europe---- they may be corrupt, but they have a dynamism and vigor that the Babbitt's, for all their "boosting," do not have. The Babbitts are the puppets the managers manipulate for their own gain: "We're safe," Offutt tells Thompson, "as long as the good little boys like George Babbitt and all the nice respectable labor-leaders think you and me are rugged patriots." Meanwhile, the G.A.R. veteran dies--religious, unmaterialistic, patriotic, and ignorant--his death symbolizes the collapse of an older, better but still imperfect America.

The dinner party which Babbitt gives to sustain his social prestige provides Lewis with the opportunity to examine upper-middle class society as a group. He finds their social views hypocritical: while they see nothing wrong with middle-class drinking, for the distinctly inferior working class "prohibition is a mighty good thing." They do not discuss music or art, but their views of literature, as a means of promoting a product, would no doubt encompass these media of creative expression too. They are highly superstitious people who momentarily believe in the spiritualist game they are playing. And their academic training, like Babbitt's, has been rudimentary. While he half-believes that Ted can get a good "mail-order" education, they know little more than a few names--"Jack Shakespeare," "Old Verg," and "Dante." And, after all, Dante and the rest of them were foreigners.

Babbitt's escape to the Maine woods with Paul brings about a temporary respite to his restlessness; as he goes back to Zenith, he resolves to plunge into new interests--theaters, public affairs, reading. Baseball, he imagines, will be a good hobby. But in a very short time he is caught up again in the ardent bustle of his business. The real estate convention is an opportunity for Babbitt to gain more of the social approval he so eagerly desires; he tells his fellow businessmen exactly what they want to hear, that real estate is a profession. Because he is not under the eyes of Zenith, Babbitt considers the convention something of an adventure. He starts his escapades timidly enough, by having his pants pressed on the train; he ends them by making the wearing rounds with the "boys." His moral habits, it seems, have been forced on him by his Zenith environment; let him get as far away as Monarch, and the real George Babbitt appears. The freedom Monarch offers him does not, however, dim his loyalty to Zenith in any way: "Snothing you can't find in Zenith," he rages drunkenly, "Believe me, we got more houses and hootch-parlors an' all kinds o' dives than any burg in the state." Somewhat ashamed of himself, he throws himself into Zenith's political battles shortly after he returns. He enjoys both the righteousness of his role as a crusader and the publicity crusaders receive. His annual address to the Zenith real estate board, in which he describes the Ideal Citizen (whom he also recognizes as "The Sane Citizen" and "The Standardized Citizen"), concisely details Babbitt's world view.

Religion, which might have presented an alternative to the doctrines of the secular society to which Babbitt belongs, is no less a business than real estate. It's educational function is now conducted in basement rooms where after-dinner speakers, liquorish young men, and spinsters teach the beauty and value of the Christian tradition. He proposes to promote religion as he knows everything else is promoted in Zenith, by advertising it in a half-bullying, half-enticing way. His invitation to the Eathorne residence partly alleviates the pain the failure of the McKelvey dinner party has caused him. His deliberate snub of the Overbrooks demonstrates his lack of charity, even his ignorance of the rules of common courtesy.

After Paul shoots his wife, Babbitt finds himself alone for the first time. Paul was his only friend. His wife and children, involved in their own interests, cannot offer him the companionship he desires; his business acquaintances, although they sympathize with Babbitt's loss of his best friend, can offer him nothing to replace the understanding Paul gave him. Babbitt's middle class has always confused and frightened him, but as long as Paul--whose judgment he usually trusted more than his own--was around, he felt safe. When finally not even his money or the offer to perjure himself can save Paul, he turns to work and then to women. His instinct directs him to find the fairy-child of his dreams, for it is only in his dreams that he can master the bewildering, meaningless tedium he has come to think of as life. After mistaking his secretary, Louetta Swanson, and the manicure girl in the Pompean Barber Shop for his dream girl, he meets Tanis Judique.

Babbitt also breaks into mild rebellion against the ignorance, prejudice, and hypocrisy that have so long dominated his own thinking and the thinking of his associates. The fury with which his peers, even the Group, turn on him for his tolerant attitude toward the striking workers is the anger of men whose businesses, homes, and religion have been suddenly and wantonly attacked. "George, when it comes right down to a struggle between decency and the security of our homes on the one hand, and red ruin and lazy dogs plotting for free beer on the other, you got to give up even old friendships," Virgil Gunch tells Babbitt. "'He that is not with me is against me.'"

Babbitt's prestige falls, he is visited by the Good Citizens League, his wife is pressured--none of this, however, forces him to capitulate. But at last public opinion wins. Babbitt cannot stand up to the Zenith middle class: "The independence seeped out of him and he walked the streets alone, afraid of men's cynical eyes and the incessant hiss of whispering." He totally surrenders when Myra falls ill. He realizes that he belongs to Zenith, no matter what it is, and that his personal life is completely bound up with the life of his community. He becomes a hypocrite, fervently denouncing Doane Seneca. His peers accept and forgive the sinner everything--not reluctantly but generously, if only to make that much more improbable any future rebellion.

The most hopeful note in the novel is struck on its final page when, to Ted's amazement, Babbitt appears as if he is "really going to be human." And he is--. He makes the hard confession that "I've never done a single thing I've wanted to in my whole life! I don't know as I've accomplished anything except just get along." But Ted has done something he wanted to do, Babbitt realizes; perhaps such self-indulgence is, after all, the better way. He encourages his son to rebel even further against middle class mores by quitting the university and taking a factory job.

The tragedy of Babbitt is, however, that he cannot rebel except behind closed doors. He has, for all his wealth and importance in the community, failed. And he knows it.

VI. Babbitt as Satire

It must not be forgotten, of course, that Babbitt is still a novel, despite the amount of social protest Lewis has put into it. Its attack on the institutions and ideals of society classifies it as satire, not all of which is meant to put the reader into a sad and gloomy state of mind. A good many of Babbitt's prejudices, attempted tricks, and quite human frailties invite laughter. Lewis' presentations of the contrast between the business letter Babbitt writes and the letter his secretary writes, of Babbitt's "crime" of having his pants pressed on a train, of Myra's ruining his Maine vacation, are among the frankly humourous episodes in the book. But Lewis' satire is usually biting, angry satire, such as the Roman poet Juvenal wrote. Some of the techniques Lewis employs to maintain the satirical tone are parody, irony, sarcasm, and even invective. Babbitt's speeches, for instance, are parodies or mockeries of what one might have heard from a businessman speaking to his group after a business luncheon. In other words, Babbitt says what the businessman of the '20's might say; Lewis has made sure, however, that Babbitt says what he says so blatantly and so vigorously that his words sound very foolish indeed. Irony means a device designed to convey the exact opposite of what is spoken or written. Lewis remarks ironically, for example, at the beginning of chapter twenty-one: "The International Organization of Boosters' Clubs has become a world-force for optimism, manly pleasantry, and good business." He does not expect his statement to be taken at face value; he is actually taking a shot at the Boosters. A few sentences later, still remarking about the Boosters, he takes a heavier, sarcastic tone: "None of these [chapters of the Boosters] is more ardent that the Zenith Boosters Club." It is difficult always to distinguish between irony and sarcasm; often it is a matter of very slight emphasis, but in general sarcasm is more angry, more direct than irony. There is some direct invective in Babbitt, though like most good writers Lewis uses it sparingly. Invective, or direct denunciation, reveals Lewis' own opinion of Babbitt or the world in which Babbitt lives: "These standard advertised wares--toothpastes, socks, tires, cameras, instantaneous hot-water heaters--were his symbols and proofs of excellence; at first the designs, then the substitutes, for joy and passion and wisdom."

If the novel has a significant failing, it is that Lewis has made Babbitt almost too much a grotesque. Society has so dehumanized Babbitt, he is so much a creature of his time, that now and then the novel seems almost to slip into fantasy; it becomes wholly a Menippean satire. But only because he has such a grotesque to work with can Lewis fully utilize his talent for satire. If he had created a typical, instead of an "overly-typical" chief character, he might not have made the contribution to American letters that, in fact, he has made.

One might argue that Lewis could have made a more significant contribution to American letters if he had chosen to write a series of essays like the selection by Mencken in the students' packet. Lewis could have, it seems, more directly and effectively exposed the same wrong-headed attitudes he exposes through his fiction. Such a method, however, has several disadvantages. The irony and wit that direct-attack satire employs is chiefly valuable if one wishes to discredit one's object of attack, not to persuade. Direct satire depends almost exclusively upon the reader's perceiving the irony; and irony, in turn, depends upon transferring the meaning of certain key words, a transfer which will take place only if the readers and the author have the same point of view or "perspective" (cf. 9th Grade, Attitude, Tone, Perspective). If the author assumes one point of view or "perspective" and the reader another, then the effect is lost. Many students, when first reading Swift's "Modest Proposal" or "An Argument Against the Abolishing of Christianity," fail to perceive what Swift is saying because they assume a different perspective than does Swift. Only when the student becomes aware of Swift's perspective does he get the point. Mencken takes the same risk. He has to assume that the reader has the same point of view that he does in order to make his irony work. Conceivably, an American aristocrat could read Mencken's essay and miss the point. If one is a member of the aristocracy Mencken attacks, then he has assumed the attitudes which Mencken sees as despicable. He may not like Mencken's strong blow.

Moreover, the kind of satire that Mencken writes may provoke but not persuade. It claims to describe and comment upon the "real world"; it sets forth propositions about the "real world," descriptions of the real world which can be shown to be true or false. The direct attack method, thus, invites argument and, ultimately, requires that the reader accept Mencken's credentials as a moral and social critic, statistician, and historian.

Lewis evidently found it wise to avoid the limitations of direct-attack satire; he perhaps thought it necessary to insure that he and his readers view from the same perspective, an insurance he purchased by creating a fiction which allowed him to avoid having to comment directly upon the real world and having his readers test the truth or falsity of his propositions. Lewis did not wish to invite argument or merely to discredit. Hence, he employed a fiction or fable through which he could portray and comment, indirectly, upon American society; through which he could objectify those attitudes and patterns of action that he wished to criticize; and through which he could force his readers to move back and look at themselves more objectively than if he had directly attacked their way of life.

Had Lewis wished to achieve satiric distance of the kind described above, it may seem that an animal fable such as the one Swift uses in Gulliver's Travels Book IV or Orwell uses in Animal Farm would have been better than the human fable used. There are, however, several possible reasons why Lewis chose to write as he did. For the sake of clarity, a satiric animal fable requires that the author use each animal to represent a specific pattern of action, or vice, virtue, or attitude.

Such a fable requires that the reader separate out what each animal stands for. For Lewis such a requirement would present endless problems for himself as well as for his readers. He, for instance, does not portray a variety of social classes but focuses almost entirely on the middle-class. Nor does he portray only generic vices and virtues; he examines various individuated manifestations of a few generic vices, mainly avarice and lust. Our author could have, for instance, used the rooster, which has traditional associations with clergymen, to represent the vices of Doctor Drew, but then, what animal would he have used in place of Mike Monday?

The animal fable does not allow for "individualization" of satire; it generally seems to require a highly stylized action, unlike the action involved in the real estate transactions in Babbitt; it requires relationships unlike the relationships of Paul and Zilla and of George and Myra Babbitt. The allegorical character of animal fable limits the possibilities for serious satiric exploration of psychological change in a character; an animal who exhibits a Hamlet-like complexity becomes merely laughable and looses its satiric bite. But changes in Babbitt's character allow Lewis to satirize with greater range, to demonstrate through his fiction the futility of the average man's attempts to substitute more defensible values for those of his society, to force the reader to identify with Babbitt as he discovers the folly of his way of life, to gain the necessary satiric distance without alienating him from the characters, especially Babbitt. The grotesque characters that populate Lewis' novel are not aimless creations. They are grotesques created out of all that is objectionable and vulgar in American culture, distortions of the middle-class Americans with whom the reader can identify and in whom he sees his own follies and faults mirrored. The illusion created by Lewis' fiction presents the reader with a world different enough from his own to allow him to gain some objectivity but similar enough to it to make its criticism pointed.

Teaching Suggestion: The students are asked to compare and contrast the techniques of Mencken, Swift and Lewis. Perhaps the discussion of the Swiftian passages ought to be supplemented by a comparison of Babbitt and Animal Farm which the students read in the ninth grade. Whatever materials are used, the students should be led to discover why the human fable adapts itself most readily to Lewis' purpose. Hopefully, the questions in the student packet and the teacher's suggestions and guidance will assist the teacher in accomplishing this objective.

F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Man and the Vision

Fitzgerald was born in 1896 at St. Paul, Minnesota; his family was not rich, but, thanks to a legacy, was able to maintain a quite comfortable home. After receiving a basic education in the St. Paul schools, young Scott was sent to the Newman Academy, a college preparatory school favored by wealthy Catholic families in the East. He attended this New Jersey academy for two years, acutely conscious of the fact that he was rubbing shoulders with boys far richer than he. His family's connection with Francis Scott Key, American patriot and song writer, enabled him, however, to consider himself the social peer, or almost the social peer, of his classmates. He classified the Fitzgeralds as a surviving remnant of America's old, if somewhat impoverished, aristocracy. He was not immediately popular at Newman, partly because he was somewhat inept at athletics. With the improvement of his football skills, and later his success in writing and drama, he did become a favorite with the Newman student body.

In the fall of 1913, Fitzgerald entered Princeton. He was tremendously ambitious, confident that his "assets"--good looks, charm, intellect, and talent--would enable him to win the regard and social prominence he so eagerly desired. He dressed carefully, paid a great deal of attention to all the nuances of polished manners, and sought to enter politically powerful, socially elite campus organizations. His work with the Triangle Club, the student theatre group, and his writing for the Nassau Literary Magazine made him an important figure on the Princeton campus. But under the strain of these extra-curricular activities, and the expense of energy he put into rushing about with the most socially-minded of the Princeton students, his health broke down. In November of his junior year, he went back to St. Paul to recover his health. He returned to Princeton in 1916, but with his class graduating, he felt too much the lone wolf to care for staying at the University long enough to graduate. He applied for a commission in the Army, and in November, 1917, reported to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for three months of officers' training. He soon found he disliked the military life. He was convinced that he was destined to become a writer, and that any other activity was a waste of time. Every minute he devoted to the first drafts of what was to become This Side of Paradise. Stationed next at Camp Sheridan, near Montgomery, Alabama, he became a sleek, handsome hero to the Montgomery country club set, and it was at their weekly country club dances that he met his romantic ideal of a woman--Zelda Sayre, the daughter of a distinguished Southern family, 18 years old, "fast," and beautiful. Meanwhile, he had submitted his drafts of The Romantic Egoist, as he called it, to Scribner's, where it was finally turned down, despite a revision and despite the enthusiasm of one Maxwell Perkins, one of Scribner's editors. He went feverishly to New York, having promised Zelda that he would soon be a great success. He worked at a $90 advertising job and rewrote his novel at night--resubmitted it to Scribner's as This Side of Paradise, and in the fall, it was accepted. When it appeared in the following year, it received excellent reviews. Overnight Fitzgerald found himself famous, rated with Keats, Byron, Dreiser, called a young genius, a romantic, a realist--but most of all, a talented spokesman for the Jazz Age. In This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald set a pattern which he would follow in writing the rest of his novels. He saw life in satiric-tragic dimensions, as a contest between romantic illusion and coarse reality. The reality slowly and viciously disintegrated the illusion. The wealthy, proud, enthusiastic "Jazz Age" undergraduates of This Side of Paradise live at a frantic pace, striving to turn their existence into something heroic and beautiful. But in the end, their dreams founder. They come of age "to find all gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in men shaken." Fitzgerald could not condemn the romantic impulse that created the illusion. The impulse itself was noble and good, but at the same time, he saw clearly, even bitterly, that all dreams end and, for those who gave their hearts too fully to the dreams, end tragically.

Almost without exception, the important characters of Fitzgerald's fiction are materialists, either because they have become addicted to a wealth their families possess, or because they don't have it and feel its lack as an almost moral inadequacy.

The materialistic children of This Side of Paradise are self-centered, sophisticated, bored, and flippant. They are young men and women who know what they want and are willing to do almost anything to get it. They especially delight in sexual exploits, or at least delight in talking about sexual exploits. The "Jazz Age" woman, for example, confesses casually in mixed company that she has kissed not a few, but dozens, of men. Amory Blaine, the hero of This Side of Paradise, is the pampered darling of a foolish mother. He emerges from Princeton neither a scholar nor a gentleman. His education has left him, instead, inept, bewildered, cynical as to life and religion, intellectually dead. He does not know quite what has happened to him, but he dimly understands that the good times are over, that he is spiritually bankrupt. Towards the end of the narrative, he becomes a pathetic figure. "There was no God in his heart . . . his ideas were still in riot; there was ever the pain of memory; the regret for his lost youth." Fitzgerald seems finally to sympathize with, rather than condemn, Blaine: "Here was a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a revery of long days and nights . . . a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success."

Fitzgerald's novel, The Beautiful and Damned, written in 1922, told much the same story as This Side of Paradise, except that the problem children had grown a bit older. Stimulated by gin, full of arrogance, defiant, hating the "herd" and the "Puritan," his characters waste their vitality in the fury of rebellion against a vaguely frustrating world that they cannot understand and that cannot understand them. Anthony Patch, grandson of a millionaire, is wrecked in bitterness because the promise of great wealth never matured. His wife, the modern, uninhibited female, Gloria Gilbert, is likewise damned by the fast but shallow pace of her existence and the loss of her beauty.

In 1922, Fitzgerald published a volume of short stories, Tales of the Jazz Age, and in 1923, an unsuccessful play entitled The Vegetable. In 1924, he and Zelda went to Europe, where living costs were cheaper and where, they supposed, they could find culture and freedom. Except for two short trips home, they remained in Europe until 1931. Traveling a good deal, living in hotels, giving and going to many parties, and--especially--drinking more and more heavily, the Fitzeralds lived through what Scott was later to call "seven years of waste and tragedy." It seemed almost as if he and Zelda were intent upon becoming tragic symbols, martyrs perhaps, of the lost, disillusioned generation about which Scott wrote. Except for The Great Gatsby, which was written during the fall and winter of 1924, Fitzgerald published no other novel until 1934, when Scribner's issued his Tender is the Night.

The Great Gatsby was the best writing Fitzgerald had yet done. He found that if he told the story at second-hand, through the eyes and ears of a narrator, he could dramatically control the situation about which he was writing. In other words, a narrator could stmucture the story of Gatsby.

If the author had told the story directly--flatly describing the character and events he had imagined--he would probably not have been able to dramatize it as well. Even more importantly, the narrator was a focus for the mood Fitzgerald wanted to create. His writing had never been didactic; his primary goal had never been, above all, to praise or blame anyone's ideas or style of life. He wished to present feelings. The joy and dispair of the dreamer was, he thought, a sufficient justification for his art. The dreamer Gatsby is explored through Nick Carraway, a narrator whose background and social position are sufficiently different from Gatsby's own to enable him to judge Gatsby somewhat objectively. Nick has come East to find excitement and riches, and, because Gatsby is both exciting and rich, he identifies with Gatsby for a while, or at least admires him. But his sympathetic understanding of Gatsby does not, finally, blind him to the truth. He sees that Gatsby's search for social approval and the love of a socially-approved woman is a sterile quest. He penetrates the background Gatsby has given himself, and finds it a lie; he discovers the tainted source of Gatsby's money. And at last he comes to know the real Daisy and the real Tom. Daisy is not the pure, romantic goddess Gatsby has taken her for. She is a weak woman, dependent upon Tom's wealth, quite willing to let Gatsby die for the murder she has committed. Her affection for Gatsby is the fondness of a child for an amusing, handsome pet. Gatsby is a tragic figure in Nick's eyes because he has given too much of himself to the dream. And he dies for his folly. Nick leaves the ground of this tragedy and returns to the West. He had never "approved" of Gatsby as a moral man, but he does approve of Gatsby's impulae to create something noble and good out of his life. "They're a rotten crowd," is the last thing he says to Gatsby; "You're worth the whole damn bunch put together."

The last novel Fitzgerald published, Tender is the Night, describes the collective life of a group of rich Americans in France during the '20's. Dick Diver, the hero, gives up a career in psychiatric medicine to marry one of his patients, Nicole Warren, a wealthy Chicago girl whose father is at least partly responsible for her condition. Actually, Diver marries Nicole out of pity, and because her wealth allures him. His destruction, as he goes from party to party and from crisis to crisis with Nicole, is slow but certain. Their friends are all somehow morally perverse, spiritually decadent, unable to cope with the world and with themselves. Finally, after Nicole forms an adulterous relationship with an acquaintance, Dick finds himself emotionally bankrupt. He sees his home, his children, his work, and even his desire to love suddenly crumble. He has been abandoned by the rich. But he loved them too well, and thus he is left with nothing, not even with a sense of respect for himself.

The last decade of Fitzgerald's life was as tragic as anything he ever wrote in his novels. Zelda became ill and had to be hospitalized; and Scott's own health, undermined by worry and alcoholism, collapsed. Because *Tender is the Night* did not prove the financial success he had hoped, he supported himself by writing short stories and, later, movie scripts in Hollywood. Although much of his magazine writing was hack-work, some of it seems as good as anything he ever wrote. In late 1939, he began another novel, *The Last Tycoon*, but he died of heart failure before he had finished it. A good many of Fitzgerald's critics have found the writing he did for *The Last Tycoon* brilliant and disciplined, clear evidence that the years of tragedy had not destroyed him as an artist. He died thinking that he had been a failure, that he had squandered his literary talent.

It is probable, however, that *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender is the Night* will continue to constitute a significant part of America's literary heritage.

The Great Gatsby:

The most important character in the novel, at least if one considers *The Great Gatsby* from a structural point of view, is not Gatsby, but Nick. Gatsby is, after all, never directly presented to the reader; one knows him only as he exists in Nick's memory and imagination. Nick himself is as mysterious as Gatsby. Just as Gatsby has two sides to his personality, the businessman and the romantic, and two lives, his shabby background and his later splendor--Nick also has two sides to his personality and two lives. Nick's background is the wholesale hardware Carraways, unimaginative people who hand their business down from generation to generation, prominent in what Nick suspects is the warm center of the universe: the Middle West. Nick is a sort of rounded Babbitt, and he comes from a slightly rounded Zenith. As Midwesterners, the Carraways are "realists," taking the world for what it is, not trying to improve it, living [illegible] the bourgeois-complacent advice to avoid "criticizing any one," because they may not have "had the advantages you've had." But the Carraways are also highly moral people. They may not criticize, but they do have definite notions on what is right and what is wrong. In fact, one suspects that Nick's advantages refer to the sense of morality he has inherited, not to a comfortable upbringing. Nick never escapes the inheritance. Though he may try to practice tolerance, may even brag about it, he must "come to the admission that it has a limit." As a moralist, Nick condemns Gatsby, "who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn." And after he leaves the East, he returns to the Middle West wanting "the world to be uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever."

Nick's other life, and the second side of his personality, is characterized by a romantic outlook. His romantic, imaginative self seems to have developed in college, where he was "rather literary." This other self seeks the East, a ground of adventure, and despises the Middle West as "the ragged edge of the universe"; it puts even his occupation into a bright new light, so that he regards his books as "new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew." Nick, as a romantic, loves Gatsby, recognizing "something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away." He feels that Gatsby possesses "an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person . . . ."

As a result of Nick's dual viewpoint, he is able to see Gatsby as a man and as a satirized grotesque. In the end, deciding "Life is much more successfully looked at through a single window after all," he chooses to follow his moral, realistic self. He ends his relationship with Jordan Baker and takes the train for home. But in the final paragraphs of his account of Gatsby Nick hints that the romantic impulse that attracted him to Gatsby is abandoned reluctantly, if only because this impulse is deeply rooted in the American character as a whole. Just as the Dutch sailors enjoyed an enchanted moment when they beheld "a fresh, green breast of the new world," so too a sense of enchantment, of promise, of "the last and greatest of all human dreams" exists in the American consciousness itself. The enchanted are found, not in the city, but "where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night." It is the moralists, the realists, the Nick Carraways who are enchanted. They do not see the careless cruelty of the rich who, viewed from afar, inhabit a glittering American metropolis as fairies inhabit a dream.

Gatsby never quite becomes a person to Nick; he is a symbol, a "series of successful gestures," of wealth, charm, and the vague but romantic promise of a kind of deeply-sensitive life. He is to Nick almost as flat as a satiric grotesque. In much the same way, Gatsby, who also has come from the West, views Daisy as a symbol rather than as a person. Gatsby dimly realizes this when, although he admits the possibility that Daisy may perhaps have once loved her husband, he remarks: "In any case it was just personal." It is not Daisy whom he loves, but an ideal world, one full of "youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor."

Nick's technique for relating Gatsby's story is impressionistic; that is, Nick makes no effort to describe fully the men and women in Gatsby's life. It would be well, in discussing Fitzgerald's technique, if teachers would discuss impressionistic painting and perhaps read the defenses of impressionism in literature written by Ford Madox Ford (Literary Criticism of Ford Madox Ford, University of Nebraska Press). Nick is content to register a series of impressions about his world. These impressions, which are often small but revealing details about occupation or appearance, come to stand for, to identify, the whole character of an individual. Tom's muscles, Myrtle's sensuous vitality, Wolfsheim's hair and jewelry, the butler's nose, Gatsby's pink suits--all these small pictures symbolize the whole of the person to which they refer. The impressionistic technique emphasizes the unreal artificial quality of West Egg and East Egg society, at least as Nick perceives it. It is as if Nick were dreaming of them, or reading of them in some romance, because--unlike real individuals--these men and women are static, are collections of gestures. They do not appear to him to move from one moral situation to another, do not grow or regress. They are, like the figures on Keats' urn, frozen and eternal.

To create an effect of moral movement in his characters, lest they seem absurdly unreal, Fitzgerald creates ironic parallels between characters and between events. Both Gatsby and Daisy, for example, fabricate illusions about themselves--Gatsby about his past, and Daisy about her present feelings. Tom's unfaithfulness to Daisy, who finally throws her lot in with him instead of Gatsby, is in ironic contrast to Gatsby's faithfulness to Daisy, who allows him to take the blame for her recklessness. Daisy's murder of her husband's mistress; Tom's attack of Gatsby's pretentions to being an educated man; Nick's faithfulness to the fabricator, Gatsby, but not to the dissembler, Jordon; and Wilson's belief that his wife's murderer and lover are one--these are further ironies. That everyone will attend Gatsby's parties, but few will go to his funeral, that he wins and then loses Daisy to Tom while the notes of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" well up from the ballroom below, that he belongs to a crime syndicate but is killed in a domestic tragedy--these elements compound the irony. In fact, there is little said or done by Gatsby and his friends that is not, in some way, ironically connected with another event or comment. All the ironic echoes, creating an illusion of character development, seem invariably to reinforce the dream-like texture of the narrative. Such coincidences give the story of Gatsby a fated quality, which is perhaps the essence of all dreams.

The opening and closing pages of the novel are retrospective. Nick remembers his experience and, as he remembers, judges it. His tone is nostalgic, as if he cannot quite renounce that time, as if--though he knows better--he would enter once more into the romance of those months. Between these first and last pages, Nick describes the process of his education. He explains how he comes to look at the Buchanans, and the world they represent, as disloyal, deceitful, and even ugly. His attitude toward Gatsby, however, changes very little. Gatsby, the romantic symbol, is not finally evaluated as a dishonest man, only an unsuccessful one. He fascinates Nick throughout the novel. And he is the ideal against which Nick measures and condemns the Buchanans.

At first, the culture, manners, and wealth of the Buchanans fascinate Nick, the uneducated idealist from the Midwest. He is delighted to have dinner with his second cousin, Daisy, in one of "the white palaces of fashionable East Egg," though he scarcely knows either her or Tom. He remembers that at Yale Tom spent money with a freedom that was "a matter of reproach," but it could hardly have been Nick who did the reproaching, for Tom Buchanan's even greater freedom with money now "took your breath away." But as soon as he arrives at East Egg, Nick falls into a pattern which will become more and more perceptive as the narrative progresses: he begins to make critical judgments, to attempt to see things as they really are--not as they first appear. The Tom Buchanan who welcomes him into his house is the first object of Nick's awakening critical faculties. "He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body--he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing . . . . It was a body capable of enormous leverage--a cruel body." He notes also a "paternal contempt" in Tom's voice, "even toward people he liked." The quality of Tom's mind--indicated by his admiration for The Rise of the Colored Empires, the work of a bigoted racist--and the revelation that Tom has a mistress, the burdensome fifth guest at the dinner party, further illuminates the real Tom Buchanan.

Daisy, too, is not what she first appears. When he meets her at East Egg Nick views her as a kind of dream figure, a fairy princess so far removed from humankind that she may defy even elemental laws of nature. "The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house." But Daisy is quite human. She cannot get along with her husband; she escapes from the real world with an almost too-girlish, too-whimsical ease. And later, after dinner, she confesses to Nick: "I'm pretty cynical about everything." But, though this awakens Nick's sympathy, he is startled a few minutes afterward by the look on her face, "an absolute smirk . . . as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged."

The evening is not a complete success for Nick. Even the sophisticated, pretty Jordan Baker sounds a faint, distasteful echo in Nick's memory. He had "heard some story of her . . . ." Daisy and Tom, when he questions them about Jordan, slander her with a moment of silence. They also slander Nick; they are all too ready to believe gossip, which claims he came East to avoid a marriage he had promised to contract. Thus, by the end of the first chapter, the dramatic situation of the novel has been established. At the root of this dramatic situation is Nick's awareness of a difference between the way the Buchanans appear and the way they really are. The difference between appearance and reality is exactly the distance between his romantic vision and the truth about the Buchanans. The contest throughout the story will be between the power of Gatsby's naive admiration for the Buchanans, which is not essentially different from Nick's naive admiration for them, and the power of the "secret society" to which Daisy and Tom belong.

The corruption Nick has sensed in the lives of the Buchanans is developed in the second chapter by the desolate image of the valley of ashes that lies between East Egg and New York. The gigantic eyes of Dr. Eckleburg symbolize the watchfulness of Nick's consciousness as, throughout the chapter and the remainder of the novel, he becomes more and more sharply aware of Daisy and Tom's spiritual decay. In chapter VIII, George Wilson associates the eyes of Dr. Eckleburg with God; the eyes, in fact, seem to recall to him a knowledge of God as vengeance, an all-seeing God who inspires the conscience of man toward a justice which vindicates an absolute law of the universe. Gatsby, represented as the son of God in the book, is an innocent sacrifice to the justice of God. He suffers from the sins of another. And he suffers because he is romantic, because he has believed in a cleaner, more beautiful world than the real one.

The valley of ashes itself seems to represent poverty, and the hopelessness of poverty. This evil eventually seeps into the lives of Tom, Daisy, and Gatsby. George Wilson is stricken with the evil, and evil which is totally alien to the culture, wealth, and charm of East Egg. He hangs on to the pathetic hope that he can make a profit off the crumbs that fall from Tom Buchanan's table. Myrtle Wilson is not less pathetic. She, too, is cursed with the poverty, ignorance, with the dumb dreams of the valley of ashes; but, unlike her husband, she is a vital, sensuous animal whose every instinct is in rebellion to her bondage. She serves Buchanan in the only way he will be served--with an animal lust. In return he permits her to put on the airs of her ideal great woman: he allows her whimsically to delay their departure from the train station; he buys her a god; and he agrees to include her sister and her sister's husband in the party. Both Catherine and the McKelveys also crudely attempt to act and think like the great rich.

That Tom would invite Nick to the party shows his contempt for Nick. It does not matter, he must suppose, whether or not Nick knows of his debaucheries, of the dirty side of his life, because Nick doesn't count. Nick, of course, is not so completely fooled: he uses the occasion to observe Tom, to become like the "casual watcher in the streets." "High over the city," Nick imagines, "our line of yellow windows must have contributed their share of human secrecy to the casual watcher in the darkening streets, and I was him too, looking up and wondering." Indeed, Nick can hardly "look up" to Tom as he once, in fact, did. Tom no longer takes his breath away with admiration; now, he disgusts Nick. The most morally degraded figure at the party in Nick's eyes is Tom. Tom has no excuse. He is ignorant, not because he was born in a valley of ashes, but out of choice. He is lustful, not as the price of escape from a dreary life, but simply because he wishes to be. He does not have to associate with the McKelveys, he wants to do so. He has had and does have a life which cannot, in Nick's eyes at least, mitigate his behavior. Unlike Myrtle and the McKelveys, he has not been deprived.

Chapters III through VI examine Gatsby just as the first two chapters have examined Tom Buchanan. Nick sees Gatsby the illusion and Gatsby the reality, Gatsby the mystery and Gatsby the fact. In the third chapter, Gatsby appears in the role of host; "In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars." But Nick soon perceives a frantic abundance in Gatsby's hospitality:

somehow there are too many parties, too many caterers, too many colored lights. These riches are not quite genuine, he thinks. Gatsby's gatherings take on the character of a circus: "The groups change ever more swiftly, swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same breath; already there are wanderers, confident girls who weave here and there among the stouter and more stable, become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group, and then, excited with triumph, glide on through the sea-change of faces and voices and color under the constantly changing light." The tales about his background that circulated among his guests create a legend about Gatsby, give him a mythic force in the mind of Nick. Gatsby becomes a satiric grotesque demi-god. The behavior of Gatsby's guests, Gatsby's own aloofness from the gaiety, and certain other insights which the narrator arrives at (the suspicion, for example, that Gatsby has never read the books in his library), indicate to Nick that Gatsby is something of a "phony," that he is putting up a "front." But he does not immediately and unmistakably condemn him, as he has previously condemned Tom. Rather, Nick feels a bond of sympathy grow between himself and Gatsby. Both of them are lonely men: Gatsby as he stands on his porch and surveys his parties, Nick as he walks the streets of New York. Both Gatsby and Nick are searching for a woman who will end their lonely vigils: Gatsby while walking up Fifth Avenue on a summer evening looking for Daisy and Nick attempts "to pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives . . . ." The basis of their friendship, it would appear, is the sympathy each feels for one who, like himself, is engaged in a romantic quest. Nick's confession that he is bewitched by a romantic imagination throws suspicion on the statement which he makes at the conclusion of chapter III, that "I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known."

The small accident which occurs in Gatsby's driveways is not, it seems, included in the narrative by chance. The cars, or the way characters use them, appear to reveal character: thus, Gatsby's car is big and flashy, Daisy is a murderous driver, Jordan is *almost* a careless driver, Wilson's great hope is Tom Buchanan's car. Ironically, Tom uses his car as a pretext to see Myrtle, and--finally--Nick sells his car before returning to the West.

Chapter IV further reveals Gatsby to Nick. Gatsby's underworld connection, as much as the almost patently spurious stories about his past, tend to destroy him as a romantic symbol in Nick's eyes. But not quite. The way in which he tells his stories, and the rather comic--if genuine--sinisterness of Wolfsheim, at least mitigate what moral censure Nick is prepared to give Gatsby. Jordan Baker's account of Daisy's wedding, however, suddenly throws Gatsby's activities into a far different light. "He came alive to me," Nick believes, "delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor." If Gatsby is not an honest man, at least Nick can approve of the reason behind Gatsby's dishonesty. Gatsby's splendor--the house, the parties, the car and airplane, the criminal associates--at once fall into a pattern. Gatsby is the romantic hero, the tender ruffian who aspires to the love of a princess. Moved by the image of Gatsby as a romantic hero, Nick kisses Jordan. He would be like Gatsby, even like Tom Buchanan, a man with a girl "whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs . . . ." One does not know, at this point, if one is reading satire, romance, or tragedy.

Chapters V and VI deepen Nick's understanding of Gatsby's romantic impulse. In Chapter V, the somewhat adolescent quality of Gatsby's dream appears: he awaits the arrival of Daisy with the doubting joy, the despairing awkwardness, of a youth meeting his first love. Here and there throughout the episode, the nervous Gatsby is presented humorously. Ironically, Nick reverses his role: instead of playing Gatsby's understudy, he consoles, advises, smoothes the path of the young lover as if he were infinitely the wiser of the two. The tour of his house that Gatsby gives Daisy and Nick serves to illustrate Gatsby's actual detachment from his possessions. His suits, his house guest, his fine furniture mean no more to him than proof of his right to love Daisy. "He hadn't once ceased looking at Daisy," Nick remarks, "and I think he revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes. Sometimes, too, he stared around at his possessions in a dazed way, as though in her actual and astounding presence none of it was any longer real. Once he nearly toppled down a flight of stairs." The suspicion crosses Nick's mind that perhaps the flesh and blood Daisy cannot live up to the Daisy Gatsby has so long imagined. Such a suspicion, one that crosses Gatsby's mind as well, is a presentiment of Daisy's final betrayal of her lover. "As I went over to say good-by," Nick remembers, "I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams--not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion."

Chapter VI, beginning with a reference to Gatsby's notoriety and then examining Gatsby's actual background, presents a sharp contrast to the romantic tone of the reunion with Daisy that Nick has just described. "His parents," Nick relates, "were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people--his [Gatsby's] imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all." Eventually, the essential difference between Gatsby and Nick will be the capacity of Nick to accept the West, to acknowledge his actual background, and to refuse to live in a world of imagination. Gatsby's rejection by Ella Kaye is analogous to his rejection by the Buchanan party that visits his house on horseback. The men will have nothing to do with him. They examine him as one might examine a phenomenal insect. The final rejection in the chapter is made by Daisy. Despite all that Gatsby can do for her at his party, "She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village--appalled by its raw vigor that chafed under the old euphemism and by the too obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short-cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand." In judging Gatsby's "setting" in this way, a setting that after all he has prepared only to attract and impress her, Daisy judges Gatsby. For a moment, she becomes like the normative figure in a satire or comedy.

The seventh and climatic chapter of the novel ends with Gatsby keeping watch over Daisy, enjoying "the sacredness of the vigil," but ironically bringing to completion Daisy's judgment on him for,as Nick knows,Gatsby is "watching over nothing." The first key episode in the chapter is the luncheon. Nick's view of the Buchanan household is far different than the one he experienced when he first attended a Buchanan luncheon. Daisy and Jordan no longer seem to float in the air; they "lay upon an enormous couch, like silver idols weighing down their own white dresses against the singing breeze of the fans." The butler answers the telephone with the seeming cry of "The Master's body," noting "I'm sorry, madame, but we can't furnish it". During the other luncheon, Tom has been called -- to talk on the telephone. Ironically, the caller this time is not Myrtle, as Jordan suspects, but her husband. The heat -- heat so intense that Nick is led to speculate: "That any one should care in this heat whose flushed lips he kissed, whose head made damp the pajama pocket over his heart!" -- and the appearance of Daisy's little girl further create a sensation of frustration and disorder. Daisy behaves erratically, kissing Gatsby one minute, playing the role of mother the next, and for a moment at least becoming morbidly whimsical by wondering aloud how she will find something interesting to do during the next thirty years. The scene at the hotel is the dramatic peak of the novel. Gatsby, lawless but innocent, and Buchanan, eminently respectable but immoral; frankly confront each other. Gatsby is moved by a dream, the desire to possess the visionary Daisy, and he appeals to her as a lover, as a romantic. Tom, moved by a desire to possess, suddenly becomes aware that "His wife and his mistress, until an hour ago secure and inviolate, were slipping precipitately away from his control." He first appeals to Daisy on the basis of respectability. "Nowadays," he argues, "people begin by sneering at family life and family institutions, and next they'll throw everything overboard and have intermarriage between black and white." Nick is aware of "transition from libertine to prig." He then changes his tactics, reminding Daisy of the past, "things that neither of us can ever forget." Finally, however, he breaks Daisy's will be rebel by destroying the image of Gatsby that Gatsby has so carefully cultivated. He portrays Gatsby as a thief, liar, swindler, and nobody. At that instant Gatsby looks "as if he had 'killed a man'". The man he has killed, in fact, is the Gatsby of his imagination, the Gatsby thatcould go away with Daisy Buchanan. The unmasking of Gatsby is too much for Daisy. When Tom takes this tack, "with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible . . . ." It is not money that Daisy finally chooses. It is the charm, the romance of money. Tom can give her that, but not Gatsby,whose fortune has been gotten in a tarnished, an ugly way. Daisy is totally committed, after all, to a style of life, to a way of thinking, to which Gatsby can never belong. Even Daisy's voice--that aspect of her which held Gatsby most, "with its fluctuating, feverish warmth, because it could not be over-dreamed"--is as Nick and Gatsby have both perceived that afternoon, "full of money, that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals' song of it . . . . High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl . . . ." Gatsby, the ruffian, can never really win such a woman; she is Rapunzel. Daisy has sold herself to Tom's world, but it finally involves more than just money. She and Tom are a separate type of people, superior to those who do not have money or to those who have made their money too fast or too rudely. In the closing scene of the chapter, following Gatsby's defeat and Myrtle's death, the concord between Daisy and Tom as they sit at their kitchen table and munch cold chicken emphasizes the fact that, after all, Tom and Daisy belong to the same "type." "They weren't happy," Nick notes, "and yet they weren't unhappy. There was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture, and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together." Their "secret society" has triumphed over romantic illusion. It is Gatsby, betrayed by a dream, who must stand nobly outside, "watching over nothing."

The movement of the novel, then, is from illusion to reality, from innocence to knowledge, from aspiration to defeat. Especially it is a movement from tolerance to judgment. Nick has learned his lessons well. Fittingly, the shattering of Gatsby's romantic dream, a dream with which Nick himself has sympathized, comes about on Nick's thirtieth birthday. As he looks down "the portentious, menacing road of a new decade," he realizes that it is time to go back to the West, time to forget his romantic dreams of love and wealth, time to look at life through a single, moralistic window after all. If he doesn't, if--for example--he accepts the subtle offer of Jordan Baker to associate himself somehow with her type of people, then he may end up as Gatsby has ended up, tasting moral defeat on a hot Sunday afternoon in a rented room. As Gatsby died, he too perhaps has arrived at the truth, finding "what a grotesque thing a rose and how raw the summer sunlight . . . ," as the ashen figure of George Wilson apporached him for the holocaust, the sacrificial act. Daisy is the rose, young and artificial, from a world "redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year . . . ." And because he loved her too much, he has had to face a harsh, glaring reality. He is sacrificed for a dream

The final chapters of the book reveal the callousness and ignorance of the world about Gatsby. His admiring father, overwhelmed by the riches his son has accumulated, is a potential Gatsby, for it is to the splendor of money and the love money can buy that Gatsby has given his life. As for Gatsby's friends, they betray him as Daisy has betrayed him, forgetting him the moment he can no longer amuse or serve them. "Gatsby," Nick believes, "believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us." But Nick, wiser now, does not.

"Gatsby" as Satire

Although *Gatsby* contains elements of romance and tragedy, this unit emphasizes its character as a Menippean satire like Petronius' *Satyricon*--one which mocks the "banquet" of the roaring '20's by using mock-romance techniques--as does Wibberly's *The Mouse That Roared*. Wibberly uses the perspective of the fourteenth century in order to comment upon the twentieth century; T. H. White uses the same satiric technique in his *Once and Future King*. Romance, which has its roots in the epic, characteristically creates a world in which the action is highly stylized and in which flat characters live; like the mode of epic, the mode of romance readily lends itself to use in satiric fiction. One may speak of "mock-romance" as well as "mock-epic." It may be useful to place Gatsby against some of the "fairy tale" romances which the curriculum suggests for grade-school study, or which students may have read in early childhood: *Rapunzel*, *Cinderella*, *The Three Languages*, *The Snow Queen*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Tailor*, *Rumpelstiltskin*. Ask the students to consider in what sense Gatsby is a "mock-ruffian" of fairy tale trying to be a "mock prince"? To what extent is Daisy the mock-princess? What determines the difference between the mock-romance terms in which Gatsby imagines the world and the terms of genuine romance?

Another outgrowth of the epic is the picaresque novel, which, like the romance, usually has a satiric purpose. The picaresque novel characteristically has a social outcast, usually a roguish youth, as hero, who travels through a society and encounters characters representative of various levels of society. Through the picaro's eyes, the follies and foibles of the society become evident. Now if the action of The Great Gatsby is separated from Nick's comment, had it been narrated by a third person narrator, Gatsby would be a romance or mock-romance for at least the first six chapters. All the characters are flat, two-dimensional. Gatsby never really changes; Nick's view of him does. Miss Baker, the Wilsons and the Buchanans act in stereotyped patterns; their actions, after our first view of them, are entirely predictable. Fitzgerald's characters live in an unreal world modelled on a "materialistic version" of fairy tale. When Nick's perspective is added, however, the romance is deflated and becomes rather "picaresque," at least in its handling of the hero. Nick, like the picaro, is a social outcast as far as eastern society is concerned. Mrs. Wilson, in the scene in the New York apartment, fails to understand Nick; Gatsby looks upon him as a way to meet Daisy; Tom looks upon him as a poor, hopelessly inept social creature, etc.

Finally, Gatsby may perhaps best be seen as neither mock-romance nor picaresque but as a new version of Trimalchio's banquet. Fitzgerald himself suggests through his allusion to Trimalchio at the beginning of Chapter VII that The Great Gatsby belongs generically with "Mennippian satire." When he alludes to Trimalchio he invites comparison between his first six chapters and Petronius' Satyricon and such comparison reveals that Fitzgeral perhaps found in Petronius his central figure, and his career, Gatsby's parties, his house, the color green, Tom's intellectual pretensions, the obsession with wealth, and Gatsby's death.

But the comparison of Gatsby and the banquet scene in the Satyricon is more instructive in regard to the technique that Fitzgerald and Petronius use. By using, as narrators, characters that are only marginally members of the society depicted both are able to bring into conflict two opposing moral universes. In Petronius the moral universe of the practical, hard-headed rogue collides with that of the overly-urbane, sense-stultifying universe of Trimalchio. In The Great Gatsby, the moral universe of the East with its moral fluffiness and softness and its constant posturing and gesturing becomes fluffier and softer, all posture and gesture, when it encounters the hard, straightforward moral solidity of the narrator's midwestern universe. In each case, the juxtaposition of two different systems of values exposes the faults of one and the comparative goodness of the other.

Perhaps the greatest problem in The Great Gatsby is the sudden and violent death of Myrtle Wilson. Her death seems out of place in a novel compounded of elements of the romance and the picaresque. The violence is out of place in the romance; death raises a profound kind of question foreign to the picaresque. Although one can trace the actions and motivations which conspire to bring about her death, one is hard put to explain its relationship to the thematic structure of the novel. Moreover her death seems to contradict Fitzgerald's impressionistic characterization. Suddenly, the characters, particularly Myrtle, who have had a kind of dream-like quality, become real.

Perhaps one can account for Myrtle's death by saying it is a device used to illustrate the fact that Tom and Daisy, who are co-operatively responsible for her death, are "careless people, who smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together." If this explanation is accepted, then perhaps one has to say that Fitzgerald through his manipulation of the plot utterly condemns the attitudes and patterns of actions which Tom and Daisy represent. These attitudes and actions beget death, a hell on earth. Gatsby's death also results from their attitudes. Although Tom knows that Daisy, not Gatsby, was responsible for Myrtle's death, he tells George Wilson that Gatsby owned the yellow car. He does not assume the moral responsibility of telling him that Daisy was driving the death car. They are responsible for ending Gatsby's dream, for what Nick refers to as a "Holocaust," which means in its non-metaphorical sense, a sacrificial offering the whole of which is consumed by fire. Myrtle and Gatsby, lovers of Tom and Daisy, are sacrificed to their gods of carelessness and egocentricity. Out of their actions the valley of ashes is created. The deaths of Gatsby and Myrtle are like the "deaths heads" at Trimalchio's banquet---reminders that the party does end.

A. T. S. Eliot: The Man and the Vision

Thomas Sterns Eliot, perhaps the most important poet and critic of the first half of the 20th century, was born at St. Louis, Missouri, in 1888. He was of Puritan stock, his family having come to New England in the 17th century from Somerset, and was educated at the universities of Harvard, Paris, and Oxford. After 1913, he considered England his permanent home and, in 1927, became a British subject. As a social and cultural critic, he has been often brilliant, often obscure, but almost always widely and carefully read. He has seemed to many a 20th-century Matthew Arnold. As a literary critic, Eliot has explained and defended neoclassical and metaphysical theories of poetry, attacked the romantic poets and the diction and syntax of Milton, and promoted the idea that new verse rhythms should be founded upon the rhythms of modern speech. Throughout his literary criticism he has demonstrated a concern for cultural problems, especially in light of his belief that, since the 17th century, English culture has decayed. He defines this decay, specifically, as the inability of the English mind to grasp an idea in the form of an image. In other words, Eliot does not believe that thought is any longer, as it was for John Donne, a process related to feeling. Eliot's critical position, which encompassed the belief that poetry should be both objective and socially useful, appears to have led him toward the drama. *Sweenev Agonistes*, (1932),a dramatic fragment, *The Rock* (1934), a set of choruses for a pageant, and five full length plays, *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935), *The Family Reunion* (1959), *The Cocktail Party* (1949), *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), and *The Elder Statesman* (1958) have all merited considerable critical attention. Not all of his dramat works, however, have been theatrically successful. Eliot also gained renown as a patron of young poets. His work as a director of the publishing house of Faber and Faber, and his long editorship of the literary magazine, *Criterion*, which he founded in 1922, made possible his generous, but discriminating, patronage. In 1948 Eliot was awarded the Order of Merit and the Nobel prize for literature. At his death in 1965, Eliot was the most honored man of letters throughout the English speaking world. Through his poems and essays he had changed the taste of his age. He had cooled the admiration toward the Romantic and Victorian poets; he had brought to the attention of the literate public the merits of the metaphysical poets, Dante, and the French symbolist poets of the 19th century.

Taken as a whole, Eliot's poetry is at least as important as his criticism. As a young poet, Eliotwas concerned with spiritual emptiness. In the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Gerontian*, in particular, he explored life without meaning, life made desolate by the lack or loss of faith. With the completion of *The Hollow Men*, however, Eliot appears to have reached an impasse. In 1927, he took a new tack and wrote the *Journey of the Magi*, a poem which seems to end in a kind of religious commitment, a contemplation of the splendor of Christ. But, though his later poetry is of a more positive and orthodox nature, it is not a complete break with his earlier work; he seems always to refer to his earlier statements about the desolate condition of man,impressing his readers with the notion that orthodoxy has grown out of rebellion, faith out of despair.

General characteristics of Eliot's poetic techniques are the conversational rhythms of his verse and the synthesizing of both thought and emotion into strongly sensate images. "Let us go then, you and I," he writes conversationally, for example, in the first line of the *Love Song of J. Alfred*

Prufrock. The following two lines, by the use of the powerful image of a patient upon an operating table, present a physical situation — the situation of evening-as an analytical situation and as a situation filled with quiet horror. "When the evening is spread out against the sky/ Like a patient etherised upon a table." There are other noteworthy aspects of Eliot's poetic techniques. He prefers the brief word rather than a complex one and is fond of sudden contrasts, rapid shifts of thought. He often achieves these contrasts and shifts by telescoping images. That is, by letting one image become or suggest another.

Eliot's method of illustrating the spiritual emptiness of the present, showing its emotional barrenness and revealing the failure of personality to exist successfully in the communal culture of the 20th century, is to refer to the past. The myths, faiths, history, and literature of different civilizations, and different times in Western civilization, are placed in sharp contrast to the present. For Eliot the tradition of the past is not, however, completely dead. It exists in the present as memory and longing in 20th-century man but he cannot quite grasp it, cannot quite integrate its vitality into himself. Particularly the poet, who of all men is the most keenly aware of the past, profoundly senses the sterility, the meaninglessness, the hopelessness of his own mechanical and soul-less era. This exploration of the predicament of modern man, a creature unable to find meaning in his own time, has earned Eliot the respect and attention of a wide public. Many agree that he is not simply a learned man and a competent poet. They look on him, rather, as one who has uncovered the spiritual cancer that afflicts the soul of our century.

One of the best presentations of the modern predicament which Eliot "satirizes" is The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. Published in 1917, the poem was greeted as a new kind of English poetry. The strangeness of the subject, the puzzling way in which it is presented did not, however, prevent the poem from being widely imitated. With its sense of emptiness and despair(which would dominate Eliot's poetry for the next thirteen years), Prufrock reminded its readers of the French poets of the late 19th and early 20th century. Jules Laforgue has a dozen poems on the horrors of Sunday, and certain of his images appear in Eliot's work: the bald head, the hat and gloves, the tie and suit. From Paul Verlaine's work Eliot may have borrowed the cat in the alley; and from Tristan Corbiere, he probably took the dead geranium. The strong sense of place that runs through Prufrock -- the consciousness of the dirt and smoke, the grime and fog, the narrow streets and the seeming clutter of objects everywhere he turns -- is very much a factor in the French poets Eliot admired. Like them, he points out the shabbiness of the world in order to manifest a poverty of spirit. One is imprisoned in an ugly society which repels starves the soul, but from which there is no escape.

The title, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, is ironic, because the "you" of the poem is not actually Prufrock's lover, but another part of Prufrock's consciousness, perhaps his conscience, or else his fellow citizens of the 20th century who find themselves trapped as he is trapped. The love song itself is never sung aloud. It is a tormenting awareness in Prufrock's mind, frozen into indecision and unable to communicate significant ideas. "It is impossible to say just what I mean," he admits at one point in the poem. Prufrock's inability to make decisions stems from a view of himself as an aging failure. He desires to live fully, yet he also desires to conform to the social milieu -- and, since there can be no true compromise between these desires -- he has failed. And yet how can he ever explain to anyone just how he has failed and why? Spiritual failure, the hopelessness of bringing his two desires into command, is too elusive, too subtly perceived to be understood and bluntly explained, as one would explain a formula in chemistry. As a consequence of the knowledge that he is a failure, Prufrock is haunted by past and future. He cannot bear to think of the future, because it promises failure, and he cannot face the past, because it has been the ground of his failure. If he makes a decision, he promises himself to failure. If he openly communicates thoughts and ideas, he must admit his past and present failure to another.

The etherized patient in the first stanza sounds the poem's dominant note of sterility: in the clean, empty operating room, the patient is peaceful and helpless , not forced to choose because his mind in so longer functional. Life, submissive to the power of ether, is empty and indecisive. Prufrock's use of his image indicates his desire to escape pain, to make his life as effortless as possible. But the half-deserted street, cheap hotels, and sawdust restaurants do not, after all, etherize him; he is led to "an overwhelming question." He refuses to answer this question. Instead, he travels on through a tedious world.

The two-line stanza about Michelangelo which is repeated twice in the poem illustrates the frustration Prufrock encounters in his dead world. He has a knowledge of beauty and truth, symbolized by Michelangelo, but the knowledge is distant, inconsequential. His thoughts, like talkative women in an art gallery, merely observe what he suspects may be true and beautiful; they do not participate in it. The image of women in the art gallery also may stand for the modern world. The world -- tedious, sophisticated, informed -- throws habitual, meaningless glances upon the past. The past has no influence on it; history, art, and religion are but conversation pieces.

In the next section of the poem, the image of the yellow fog expresses Prufroks' view of the world; It is cat-like, disgusts him, appears dirty and slyly lustful. Finally it curls about his house and, having informed him of its nature, falls asleep. The fog image is an excellent example, in fact, of Eliot's use of the objective correlative. In an essay on Hamlet, Eliot expresses the view that no emotion can be accurately expressed in art without an objective correlative. He defines his method of correlation as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that, when the external facts which must terminate in a sensory experience are given, the emotion is immediately evoked." The description of the fog, therefore, provides not only a description of Prufrock's physical surroundings, but it also creates his emotional responses to them in the reader.

Another good example of Eliot's objective correlative is seen later in the poem, in the ninth stanza, which examines Prufrock's sexual attitudes ("Arms that are braceleted and white and bare") and his contradicting distrust of any sexual relationship. He fears to make an advance to a woman ("And should I then presume? / And how should I begin?"), remembering the possible price of such an attachment: "lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows." He finally wills not attachment, but withdrawal; "I should have been a pair of ragged claws," he imagines, "Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." The reader of the poem understands not only what Prufrock thinks, but what he feels, as these images lead him through Prufrock's kind of emotional reasoning. Eliot's use of images--"objective correlatives"-

— to project emotion much more effectively reveals the spiritual reality of Prufrock than, for example, any abstract confession might.

Prufrock wonders "'Do I dare?' and 'Do I dare?,'" wonders if there is time to change the course of his life by turning around and descending whatever moral and spiritual staircase he has climbed. He even consoles himself with the idea that he can instantly reverse the whole trend of his life: "In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse." If he does reverse his steps, he will "disturb the universe," for his past and present course of measuring "out my life with coffee spoons" has made him no more than a cog in a giant machine. As he admits at the end of his reverie, the Prufrock who has measured out his life so carefully is, "an easy tool, / Deferential, glad to be of use, politic, cautious, and meticulous / Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse; At times, indeed, almost ridiculous —." If he plays Hamlet rather than an advisor of the prince a Polonius, he will cease to be a cog, to be glad to be of use; he will, in fact, disturb the universe. But Prufrock will not change. He can no more decide to disturb the universe than he can decide to part his hair behind or eat a peach. He is a satiric grotesque for part of all of us.

Prufrock's knowledge that he grows older haunts him. He turns to the concerns and pleasures of the world in order to forget the bitter morality of the past as long as he may. The questions about his hair and the peach, the consideration of whether or not he should wear his trousers rolled, and his intention to wear white flannel trousers and walk upon the beach illustrate his all-consuming concern with the material world. The mermaids he hears singing too will help him forget; they symbolize the pleasure he expects to find in the world. The human voices that will wake him and kill him may be no less than the last shred of humanity Prufrock has left: his conscience.

The knowledge that he didn't, at some point in the past, reverse his course also haunts Prufrock. If only he had had "strength to force the moment to its crisis!," he could then have mastered the universe, squeezed it into a ball; he could, like Lazarus, have arisen from the dead, from his old self. He defends himself against this regret, however, blaming an indistinct someone. No one had ever forced him to rebel against his own spiritual diseases. No one had ever stopped his chatter and said, "'That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all.'" Prufrock indirectly admits that he only rationalizes by later condemning himself to the life of the Fool. He has, after all, made a decision. He has decided to live without dignity.

The *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is a dramatic "satire," in the sense that it records the flicker of Prufrock's soul as it passes into a spiritual death. The *Preludes* are not as dramatic, yet they are at least as complex satire as is Prufrock. They reveal the drabness of urbanlife without making any explicit comment about it. The careful selection of concrete details and the flat, halting rhythm of the stanzas evoke bleak moods that attest to the spiritual emptiness of the world and its people. In the first stanza the images pertain to the early evening hour, to its heavy air smoke. Words like "grimy," "burnt-out," "withered," and "broken" build the images, and the images are the objective correlatives of feelings of sadness and loneliness. The second stanza continues the tone of the first. The beginning of the day is ironically infested with the dreariness of yesterday, the stale smell of beer, the previously trampled street, the mud created by last nights rain. Life takes its same course. It is a masquerade, but not even a beautiful one, as dingy shades are raised in a thousand dingy rooms. The third stanza indicates that the life is as burnt out, as hopelessly soiled, _within_ the human being as it is _without_ him in the streets of the city. The narrator's soiled hands and hardened feet indicate that he is a manual laborer, perhaps an inhabitant of one of the thousand furnished rooms. In the final stanza, the narrator cannot even see the sky, so well do buildings, smoke, and crowds obscure the view. It comes around to six o'clock again. For an instant, however, the squalor and futility of the scene awakens a sympathetic attitude: "I am moved by fancies that are curled / Around these images, and cling: / The notion of some infinitely gentle / Infinitely suffering thing." These curling fancies seem analogous to the withered leaves and newspapers that twist about the feet of the narrator in the first stanza. But perhaps such pity is too dangerous. The narrator obliterates it with coarse laughter, he expresses; once more, a sardonic and brutal response to the ugly world: "wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh; / The worlds revolve like ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots."

The _Preludes_ and _Prufrock_ satirize the bottom and the top of modern urban life. _Gerontian_, like _Prufrock_ and the _Preludes_, investigates a spiritual response to a spiritually barren environment, but it lacks the tragic-comic overtones of _Prufrock_, who seems much the fool: it involves a wider area of consideration than the _Preludes_, whose essential focus is the physical world. In fact, _Gerontian_ more nearly resembles _The Waste Land_ than either _Prufrock_ or the _Preludes_. The narrator of _Gerontian_ is an old man facing death and considering his salvation. As he looks at his life, he cannot maintain that he was ever carried away by any passionate concern, either for the things of this world or the next: "I was neither at the h gates / Nor fought in the warm rain / Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass, / Bitten by flies, fought." His confession that "My house is a decayed house." can refer to his physical surroundings, his situation of poverty, to "house" in the metaphysical sense "body," and -- in the wider meaning of "house" as a line of descendents or even culture -- to the civilization in which he finds himself. The "Jew" who squats on the window sill is a symbol for the decay of his "house;" that is, the narrator's civilization has become the tool of business, completely materialistic, and therefore is -- to the narrator's mind -- corrupted. The "rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds" about the house are objective counterparts to the narrator's feelings of poverty and despair as he looks at the world about him. "A dull head among windy spaces," suggests the confusion he experiences as he tries to find a meaning to his past and to his present situation.

The second stanza strikes a tragic rather than satiric note as the narrator reveals his great sin. Although he has felt that the claims promised of Christ are true, he has never been able to "speak a word," of his faith, and faith has remained "swaddled with darkness." His belief in Christ is a tiger, now, for himself as Judas and betrayer of Christ. In the second half of the second stanza, the narrator explains why he rejected the Christ he knew to be real: he was repelled by his fellow Christians, by their airs -- "by Mr. Silvero / With caressing hands, at Limoges / Who walked all night in the next room; by Hakagawa, bowing among the Titians; by Madame de Tornquist, in the dark room / Shifting the candles . . . ."

From this sin, the narrator wonders, "what forgiveness?" To have known the truth, and yet rejected it because he hated the very creatures that

Christ loved, is an evil so great that the consciousness of it brings him to the unpardonable sin of despair. He explains, in the third stanza, that history -- the record of the various attempted alternatives to Christianity -- has not offered him a faith to compare to the one he has rejected. As he considers this he weeps in his despair and grows wrathful against the false promises of the world. In the fourth stanza, he appears to warn his fellow men -- "I that was near your heart" in search for a meaning to life other than the meaning faith can give it -- that they too will "lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition." No passion for the things of the world can, finally, be maintained. All men will in the end, like the narrator, "have lost [their] passion." The narrator's desolation increases when, in the fifth stanza, he realizes that the world he has trusted will continue without him. The spiders will not suspend their operations, nor the weevils, when he has stiffened in his rented house. Until he dies, he must live with his knowledge of failure, with his fear. He will be devoured by guilt and -- what is the only hopeful note in the poem -- by remorse. But perhaps he will be led to repentance rather than despair. This possibility is suggested by the allusion to May, the juvenescence ofthe year when new vegetative life springs forth from the ruins of the old. So too the tears of remorse may bring about a spiritual rebirth in the old man. Eliot leaves the old man in his dry season, waiting for the rain. Perhaps he will still feel the rain, becoming impassioned by his tears, and will -- after all -- have "fought in the warm rain / . . . knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass, / Bitten by flies . . . . ."

This discussion of *Prufrock*, the *Preludes*, and *Gerontian*, it is hoped, has indicated the general direction of Eliot's poetry. *The Waste Land*, more complex than any of these three poems, is also concerned with spiritual meaning in a world without spiritual significance. It, too, employs the complex use of objective correlatives to create a sense of sterility, uselessness, and despair, but *The Waste Land*, more certainly than *Gerontian*, reveals a positive side to Eliot's vision of what the world is and what man is. The spiritual desert so evident in *Prufrock*, the *Preludes*, and *Gerontian*, is, in fact, crossed.

THE WASTE LAND

A. Organization of Student Packet --

When *The Waste Land* (1922) was first published, a reviewer for *The London Times Literary Supplement* noted that the work came "very near the limits of coherency." This is one of the few critical statements about the poem that will probably never become an issue of scholarly dispute. The poem may be considered a Menippean satire which involves a satiric "mock epic" visit to this world *as if* it were an underworld, Hell, or place of the dead -- like Lucian's *Menippus* or his other voyages to the underworld or like Swift's voyage to the Island of the Dead or, in comedy, Aristophanes' *Frogs*. In order to help high school students understand *The Waste Land*, the student packet asks the pupil to do two careful readings of the poem. After the first reading, or perhaps during the course of it, the student is asked various questions which should enable him to grasp the general situation of the narrator. In *The Waste Land*: *II*, the student studies the use of imagery and some thematic structures within the poem. These themes, which relate the situation of the narrator to literature and myth, should considerably enhance the student's appreciation of the poem as a spiritual testament. Though this method of two critical readings puts a greater demand on the student's time than would a single reading, the difficulty of The Waste Land makes it imperative. If themes and situation were presented together, there is at least a fair chance the student would simply shrug his shoulders and give up all attempts to decipher Eliot. The packet does not, of course, expect students to have an explanation for every line of The Waste Land. Much of the poem remains obscure to even the best of Eliot's critics. But enough of it can be understood to have earned it, in the opinion of many, the reputation of finest single poem in twentieth-century English and American literature.

B. THE WASTE LAND:

Before the first intensive reading of the poem, the student might be encouraged to skim through The Waste Land quickly, so that he can understand section B in his packet, "London as a Unifying Reference for the Poem." It should be considerably assuring to him to know that, after all, Eliot is writing about a particular place, a particular time. Physical reality, in other words, is an important principle of organization in a poem that aims at illuminating spiritual reality. Section B also repeatedly emphasizes the fact that the poem is a recording of the thoughts that pass through the mind of the narrator. The narrator's mind is not, however, a passive instrument, a Lockean tablet upon which his sense records pictures. His mind is decidely active; it selects certain impressions made upon it by the sense, and then it toys with these impressions. Memory and imagination, in particular, blend into what is immediately sensed. The narrator is the clerk of the "Game of Chess" section and this clerk-narrator is much more interested, of course, in the world inside his mind than in the world outside it. His body may occupy space in London, but he really "lives" in a cosmos which his thoughts have created.

Part I of The Waste Land indicates that it is April (line 1) a month that the narrator considers cruel and that he fears because it is a season of rebirth, not only for the physical world, but for his spirit too. He is bothered by vague memory and desire. Just as he compares his present spiritual (or psychological) state to spring, he compares his previous consciousness to winter. In winter, he could be "forgetful" (line 6); he could enjoy being only half-conscious, or etherized somehow, with only "a little life" in him. Exactly what the narrator forgot, or where the memory and desire point him, is not clear, not even to the narrator himself. He indeed is aware of memory or desire, but it has no object as yet. His winter state of "little life" resembles Prufrock's wish "to become like a patient etherised upon a table." A sense of poverty mingles with the image of winter. The narrator's consciousness, his soul, has lived like a peasant, sustained "with dry tubers."

A second voice now appears within the narrator's mind. The second voice is feminine ("He said, Marie, / Marie, hold on tight."), the scene in which the voice speaks takes place in Germany (the Starnbergersee, the Hofgarten), and the speaker herself appears to have once belonged to a wealthy or well-known family, a family that could stay with an arch-duke. The speaker experiences restlessness, however: she wants to feel free and she confesses: "I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter." This second speaker, or second principle of the narrator's consciousness, is perhaps simply imagined by the clerk as he thinks of spring. Perhaps he read of such a character in a novel, or has taken her from a movie screen. Where she comes from is not, of course, important. The mood the speaker creates reveals something more about the narrator. It emotionally qualifies what the first speaker has said, and it sets up a rhythm or a kind of dialectic within the consciousness of the clerk-narrator -- a dialectic which opposes the spiritual significance of spring, regeneration, to the misguided attempts of modern man to find regeneration through adolescent love (The Hyacinth girl), magical formulas (Madame Sosostris), and commercial enterprise (Stetson).

Lines 19-42 continue the dialectic, though the speakers are different. Again, each speaker is an imaginative construct of the clerk-narrator, each speech providing deeper insight into his spiritual condition. Lines 19-30 are prophetic, as if the speaker were an Old Testament prophet -- perhaps Ezekiel -- hearing the voice of God. The fear in a handful of dust is the fear of death. The decay of the body caused by death is alluded to as the "something different," an immaterial state when the narrator's shadow will no longer stride behind him in the morning or meet him in the evening. The image of the waste land itself symbolizes the spiritual condition of the narrator; as memory and desire stir him, as he awakens from the "little life" of his past, he encounters the desolation, loneliness, and rootlessness of his spirit. That the narrator somehow identifies with the prophet to whom God speaks indicates just how alive myth, literature, and history are for the narrator. The past is not simply dead fact. It is a force in his imagination, something on which his consciousness hangs, a means of self-knowledge. Besides symbolizing a spiritual condition of an individual, the image of the waste land may also be taken as a sign which discloses the narrator's attitude toward his civilization. Like Ezekiel, the narrator's association with men resembles the condition of a desert hermit, a man beset by thorns, briars, and scorpions.

Lines 31-42 belong to a female speaker, the Hyacinth girl. Lines 31-34, from Tristan and Isolde, create a mood of longing for one loved but gone. The Hyacinth girl, so deeply enamoured that she becomes ecstatic, "neither/ Living nor dead," suddenly looks "into the heart of light, the silence." She has loved so well, perhaps, that she is now able to love through her lover, to see some purely spiritual reality that she can only characterize as light and silence. Then comes the haunting line from Tristan and Isolde, "empty and blank the sea," which is spoken by a disappointed and dying lover, one whose partner will not return. The line qualifies the Hyacinth girl's vision, gives it a turn of sadness, betrayal, and emptiness. Is the Hyacinth girl a symbol for a woman the clerk-narrator once loved, who is gone from his life, but whom he can't forget? Or is some aspect of the clerk-narrator's soul like the Hyacinth girl; was it once joyous, did it once look into the heart of light and silence? Or is some other explanation possible? In any event, the mood these lines create is definite enough, though it is difficult to put the mood into an exact, abstract statement of emotion. The episode of the Hyacinth girl seems to explain what the waste land of lines 19-26 really is; that is, the episode creates a mood which shows how deeply the thorns of this desert can penetrate into the spirit of the narrator.

Lines 43-59 describe Madame Sosostris, a fortune teller, whom the narrator remembers consulting. He treats the episode with a certain joking mood -- Madame Sosostris "had a bad cold . . . with a wicked pack of cards" -- and yet he has a certain respect for her powers also. She is "the wisest woman in Europe." The joking tone of this section contrasts with the seriousness of the first part of "The Burial of the Dead," but it does not depart from the theme the earlier episodes have established. Madame Sosostris, hopefully, will be a spiritual guide. Using the esoteric tarot deck, Madame Sosostris presents the narrator with certain symbols which do, indeed, relate to his future. The drowned Phoenician sailor suggests Ferdinand, from Shakespeare's The Tempest; Ferdinand, whose love of power and greed brought him to shipwreck, is a prophetic warning to the narrator about the dangers of drowning spiritually in the concerns of the world. Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, is a hopeful symbol, possibly suggesting Mary, the Mother of God, who can save the narrator when he discovers himself in the spiritual desert. In Ash Wednesday, the Lady of the Rocks does, indeed, prove the single life-giving force of a waste land The man with three staves is an obscure symbol. The wheel may refer to a cyclic theory of time, the attitude that nothing changes, that man's civilizations rise and fall with cyclic regularity, and that any trust in "progress" is therefore foolish. The merchant seems to pre-figure Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant in Part III of The Waste Land; the burden he carries, since he is a sinister figure with an overtone of sensuality about him, may refer to his burden of lust. The hanged man, as Eliot points out in his notes, refers to the sacrificial offering primitive societies were wont to make to their vegetative gods in order to bring about vegetative regeneration. In a wider sense, the hanged man is also Christ, who is capable of bringing about a regeneration in the soul of the narrator. Madame Sosostris does not see Christ, the hanged man; but the narrator, who imagines he is on the road to Emmaus in Part V, does encounter Christ. The crowds of people walking in a ring suggest the crowded London streets , the Londoners who spend their lives making a frustrating circle between home and work. In general, the advice Madame Sosostris gives is bad. Although the narrator, as the poem later shows, becomes the drowned Phoenician sailor ("your card," according to Madame), he does happily die by water of regeneration (even though Madame has told him to fear it), and he does meet the Hanged Man (which Madame has not found in her deck of fortune telling cards). Lines 57-59 compromise Madame Sosostris. She is going to see Mrs. Equiton (Mrs. Equal Tone), who -- if she is in such equilibrium -- has no need of a fortune teller; further, Madame Sosostris, for all her prophetic ability, is afraid of the police. She will bring the horoscope herself, in order to avoid the possibility of being charged with a misdemeanor, because "One must be so careful these days."

As the speaker crosses London bridge, the sight of crowds in the winter dawn lead him to believe he is in an "unreal city," Dante's limbo used as a satiric fiction to mock the real hell of modern times: the gasps of the pedestrians, who struggle for air in the fog and smoke polluted atmosphere, and their intense concentration on where they are going further enforce the narrator's conviction that he is among Zombie-like shades of the underworld, not men. The clock in the church of Saint Mary Woolnoth, a businessman's church, has a "dead sound" as it rings out nine o'clock, the hour when work begins. The narrator sees a friend, Stetson, and imagines that they were both at Mylae, the scene of a Rome-Carthage naval battle in 260 B.C., a battle in the First Punic War, which was a war over commercial interests. He also imagines that Stetson's primitive ritual, the planting of a corpse in his garden, has not brought about a vegetative rebirth, as it was supposed to do. The reference to the vegetative rebirth, of course, is an allusion to the spiritual rebirth of the narrator's and perhaps Stetson's desire. The dog ironically called "friend to man" is feared because he may dig up the corpse; that is, he may loose ghosts, bring back memories, upset the pleasant balance of things. Stetson, the narrator knows, is actually afraid of rebirth. If the thing he has planted in his garden blooms, he will have unleashed the power of an unseen world, will be presented with something he may not be able to control. The narrator, imagining Stetson's fear, calls him his brother, because he too fears the power of the unseen. The whole Stetson episode is, admittedly, vague. It is no more than an imaginative flash that runs through the historical consciousness of the narrator. Its nightmarish quality characterizes the fear of the narrator, a fear that the hungers of his own soul may overwhelm him.

Part II of The Waste Land opens on a sensuous scene; the speaker evokes a vision of a modern Cleopatra, a vision which is in ironic contrast to the previous speaker's concern with the spiritual. The sumptuousness disappears however, when the picture of Philomel is considered. The Philomel of Greek legend was sexually violated by her brother-in-law, who then cut out her tongue to prevent her from telling of his shameful deed. But she wove a tapestry which pictured the crime. Later she was changed into a nightingale by the gods. In this scene, too, Philomel exposes the truth. The picture of her forces the narrator's imagination from the seeming beauty of the room; consequently, he sees it as a dreary reality. The woman in the room changes from Cleopatra to a Medusa, "her hair / Spread out in fiery points."

In the conversation between the man and the woman, the woman is vaguely afraid. Her companion broods over the futility of existence and thinks of ghosts, of "dead men" who have lost their bones, rather than their consciousness. His reference to death suggests death in the physical sense, of course, but also death as a spiritual state. Those who have nothing to live for, who find themselves trapped in "rats' alley," may be spiritually dead but physically alive. His thoughts on death recalls the reader to the final episode in "The Burial of the Dead," where the narrator and Stetson also seem afraid of a resurrection of something -- physical or spiritual -- from the past, from death. The word "nothing" in lines 120-126 is ironical; it is just this "nothing" -- the emptiness of their lives -- that is so real, the cause of so much fear in the minds of this modern Antony and Cleopatra. The one image the woman remembers is that of the drowned man, first seen by Madame Sosostris; this is the fitting symbol of all those who, like herself, have drowned in the sensuality of this world.

Lines 128-138 consider another woman, or perhaps the same one, who is so elegant, so intellectual, and so bored that she plans to sell her body in the streets, because the experience may be interesting. With line 139 another imaginative fragment drifts through the narrator's mind as he considers the condition of the lower-class woman. This speaker, the "I" of the monologue, recounts a sordid tale of marital betrayal, abortion, the love of scandal. This woman's life, no less than the modern Cleopatra's, is empty and meaningless; but, in contrast to Cleopatra, who recognizes the emptiness of her life, this woman does not. She fills up her time taking a morbid interest in the ugliness she can find about her.

Part II of The Waste Land is a collection of imaginative episodes which drift through the narrator's mind during the morning, after he has crossed into the unreal city of London and made his way to his office. Perhaps his train of thought has been inspired by a remark he has overheard, perhaps his imagination is building upon a memory of some sort. It is impossible to tell. But "A Game of Chess" does clearly enlarge upon the spiritual questions presented in "The Burial of the Dead." Whereas "The Burial of the Dead" centers upon memories, "A Game of Chess" centers on desire; the two together represent an expansion of line 3 - "mixing memory and desire."

The desire portrayed in "A Game of Chess" is an inordinate, misdirected one, concupiscence loosed completely. But this excessive, physically oriented desire subjects both men and women to a haunting awareness of the futility of modern life. This desire leads to nothingness, to a kind of spiritual suicide. The clerk-narrator, who is attempting to find his way through the waste land, will not, it appears, fall victim to sensual temptations. He sees through the sensual, sees through it to the bleakness and sterility of the human souls portrayed in this section. In Part III, "The Fire Sermon," the clerk-narrator is apparently having lunch hour. He stares into the river, whose waves tell him a wind is blowing, unheard, across the brown, barren land behind him. His mind, steeped in English poetry, morosely reflects that the nymphs -- stenographers, female clerks, typists, and so forth -- have taken their place. But these nymphs, who are not chaste as were their predecessors, have desecrated the river, not only because they choose it as a place of assignation, but also because they throw the rubbish of a materialistic society into it. "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept," the narrator thinks, as though he were an Israelite weeping on the banks of Babylonian rivers. He imagines that he hears the rattle of bones, sardonic laughter, the movement of a rat. He then envisions himself "fishing in the dull canal / On a winter evening behind the gashouse." Like Prospero in Shakespeare's Tempest he muses on the wreck, on the spiritual destruction, of others. His brother and father are "White bodies naked on the low damp ground." The rattle of bones, the references to wreckage, and the water imagery all suggest once more the fear of the dead, the fear of the past, that appears in the two previous sections of the poem. The narrator seems more afraid now than ever that something which has been buried and forgotten will rise up and come upon him. What is dead and past, but yet to come, is a spiritual force, not a physical one. The physical world is dull, frustrating, colorless; London is an "unreal city." Suddenly he imagines a woman and her daughter washing their feet in soda water. It is an ugly image. But then, just as suddenly, he hears the voice of children singing in a church. The purity of their voices contrasts sharply with the cloying image of Mrs. Porter and her daughter. Then again he hears the sound of Philomel, the cry of beauty and purity despoiled by ugliness, just as one image has been despoiled by another in his imagination.

The clerk-narrator is invited to lunch. He imagines his host as Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant, who also invites him to share a weekend in a cheap resort hotel. Mr. Eugenides, who has been prophetically introduced by Madame Sosostris, is dirty, likes sweets, is perhaps partially blind. His invitation hints of homosexuality; he is, one suspects, inviting the clerk to the Metropole to gratify his own depraved tastes.

In the next stanza, the narrator imagines himself to be Tiresias, the bi-sexual prophet of Greek mythology. It is quitting time, and the narrator-Tiresias imaginatively follows one of the typists to her apartment, sees the arrival of her guest, notes the ~~purely~~ mechanical way in which the typist and her carbuncular young man make love to one another. These two are spiritually dead; and Tiresias, who has "Walked among the lowest of the dead," has never seen beings less human.

As the narrator-clerk walks home, he is caught by the splendor of Magnus Martyr church. Its Ionian architecture, the affection the common people have for it, its richness and holiness make it a remarkable contrast to the image of the typist that has previously passed through the narrator's mind. By contrast, she is not beautiful, is thoughtless, obscene, automatic poor, and solitary. As he passes the river again, the clerk sees it as it really is, polluted with the waste and gear of industry. He thinks of how it might have looked when Queen Elizabeth and her courtly Leicester journeyed on it. And finally he thinks again of the modern nymphs of the river, passive girls who allow themselves to be sexually used. Love is as automatic for these nymphs as for the typist; the first girl, "Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe," can make "no comment" to the emotional demonstration of her lover. He does not really concern her; and probably she is of no concern to him. They are automatic people; they are a spiritually dead couple. The second girl, "On Margate Sands," can connect "Nothing with nothing." Yet the narrator wonders, as he has wondered before, about this haunting nothing. The very sterility of life leads to a burning desire to be reborn into a new life, to be born into meaning. He imaginatively echoes the cry of St. Augustine who, after years of debauchery, grew sick of his pleasures, ofnothing--and turned suddenly toward God. Like Augustine, the narrator-clerk burns with remorse, asking God to "pluck me out" of the world, of the sterile hell of nothingness. "The Fire Sermon," then, leads the narrator to see thathe must control the inordinate, misdirected passion and desire depicted in "A Game of Chess." He must not burn with the fire of passion, but be refined in the fire's divine judgment.

The image of the drowned man is the theme of Part IV. The sailor is a warning to all those who sail the seas of what may happen to them. The drowned individual forgets "profit and loss," passes the stages of age and youth, loses national distinctions, and becomes, in short, nothing. The narrator-clerk is, it would seem, just such a drowned seaman; he has involved himself so deeply in the world that he has spiritually died to all its pleasures. His death -- the awareness, in other words, that he can find no meaning in life -- has awakened a great spiritual need in him, one so great in fact that he does indeed forget profit and loss, youth and old age, and national distinction. Water, which plays so large a part in the symbolism of the poem, seems to stand here for the water of regeneration.

In "What the Thunder Said," the narrator-clerk experiences the regeneration Part IV has symbolized. The first episode takes place in the Garden on the Mount of Olives. Christ has just been betrayed by the world, a world that a little while ago had called Him a king and blessed. The "we" includes all those who are also being betrayed by the world, finding it sterile, meaningless, a great deception. Suffering follows betrayal, for both Christ and the narrator-clerk. The narrator's spiritual waste land, glimpsed first in "The Burial of the Dead," will offer him no shelter. The waterless, rocky waste, where there is no solitude and where one cannot sit or stand or lie down, is, it would seem, a vision the clerk-narrator experiences as he rides in the rocky, waterless, crowded subway on his way home from work. In other words, he has projected the nature of his immediate predicament in the world into an imaginative construct which is full of spiritual significance for him.

The "third who walks always beside you," in line 360, is a reference to Christ's appearance at Emmaus. He is not fully seen, however, in this scene that passes through the narrator's imagination. He is "wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded/I do not know whether a man or a woman," as if he were a figure in a mirage. The fact that he cannot be clearly seen evidences the incompleteness of the narrator's conversion. He still struggles against a complete surrender to his spirit. He is still attached to the world. But the world is crumbling; as he rides the subway, he imagines he hears a "sound high in the air / Murmur of maternal lamentation." Barbarian hordes are swarming over the plains above him, the earth is cracking, cities and civilizations — "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria Vienna and London" — are falling to pieces. Such destruction symbolizes his ever more perfect detachment from the world, from the "unreal." His wish to separate himself from the spirit of his time has created an imaginative situation in which he sees his wish fulfilled.

In lines 378-380 the narrator imaginatively sees the world of man as remarkably ugly. Bats, empty wells, violet lights, and towers upside down in the air constitute a vision of the world as hell. The woman he sees is a witch, her womanhood devoted to fashioning the evil which he surveys.

What the narrator-clerk next sees is a holy chapel, the home of the wind that has been such a fearful force in the previous imaginative episodes that he has experienced this day. As he approaches this chapel, he no longer fears the dry bones, symbol of death. He is dead now, to the world. He is the drowned sailor. The cock on the rooftree is the sign of good luck. Then the rain comes, symbolic of baptism, a regenerative force in the vegatative as well as the spiritual world.

The creed of his regeneration is summed up, in lines 401-423, in three words: Give, Sympathize, and Control (_Datta_, _Dayadhvam_, _Damyata_). To give oneself means "the awful daring of a moment's surrender," when one is willing to lose his life in order to gain it. The individual who gives has rejected the world totally; he has seen through it, grasped its sterility, and gone beyond it into what is meaningful. He has given himself _to_ something else. Such giving is not to be found after death, "in our obituaries." Rather it is a dynamic process of a living being, the effort of the soul to shake lose from the bonds of an appetite for all that is material and transient. Sympathize — _Dayadhvam_ — means to sympathize with the soul which is imprisoned in the body as certainly as Coriolanus, a famous politician fallen from repute, was once imprisoned. The key to this prison is an elusive hope: the more one thinks of it — thinks, that is, of some material pleasure that will release the soul from its imprisonment — the more he confirms the fact that he is imprisoned. The narrator understands, as he reflects on _Dayadhvam_, that there is no escape from the prison, except through acceptance of the soul's condition and a sympathy for the soul's, in contrast to the body's, needs. _Control_ — _Damyata_ — is illustrated by an analogy between a boat the narrator has sailed and his own heart. Like the boat, his heart could be obedient when invited. Through giving, through sympathy, he issues his heart the invitation to obey.

In the final lines of the poem, the narrator finds himself detached from the world. He is willing to let London Bridge fall, willing that his lands fall into disorder. The arid plane, the waste land, is behind him now. He is at peace. His activity, fishing, not only implies peacefulness, but also has a Christian connotation, recalling Christ's command to his apostles that they fish for men, not for themselves. The quotation from Dante indicates that the experience of finding the world a spiritual waste land is a continuous one. The spiritual ordeal has a purifying effect that must be repeated. The prince of Aquitaine at the ruined tower recalls the falling towers of line 374; the fallen tower, symbolic of the narrator's detachment from civilization, is contrasted to the image of the swallow, a sign of the narrator's present freedom of spirit. "The fragments," the imaginative episodes the narrator has lived through during the day, have been a spiritual protection. They have shored his spiritual ruins, made his spirit at least habitable for him. This view of the imagination, as a salvatory force, is of course the poet's defense of his poem. He has justified its existence. He may be mad, in the world's eyes; but his madness is a spiritual sanity. The quotation "Shantih shantih shantih," the peace that passeth understanding, is the final statement of the fact that the narrator-clerk has, by journeying through the waste land, arrived at a living truth.

B. ELIOT AS SATIRIST

The Waste Land is not only a kind of spiritual autobiography; it is a satiric poem written in the mode of Menippean satire which uses a journey to a fictional underworld (or Hell) to comment on this world--on the materialism, meaninglessness and emptiness of the world of industry and capital, the world after Freud, Marx and their likes. If *The Waste Land* records the voices, myths, and memories "heard" and seen by a London clerk, it does so to show how *he can make nothing of life's meaning* as a wasted, deracinated modern man. But the things from the past which he encounters are *eidola*, pictures of ideals, which do suggest what life was like when it was lived in meaningful terms, and these *eidola* suggest a meaning in modern experience which the clerk cannot perceive. *He* sees modern life as a "Hell" because it is boring, automatic, mechanical and disconnected; the poem, however, sees modern life as a Hell because it is guilty and found guilty in terms of the *eidola* of the past. Philomela condemns Mrs. Porter.

Eliot begins the poem by inverting a tradition. In the opening lines of the poem, he plays with seasonal symbolism. April, the month of spring, of the Resurrection, of regeneration, becomes a dreaded season associated with torturing recollections of the past. Winter, on the other hand, carries more favorable connotations than the narrator's April. Even though "dried tubers" sustain only a "little life," the narrator prefers this banal, meaningless existence to regeneration. Eliot, who does not share his narrator's view of the season, uses the inversion in order to satirize modern society's attitudes: it does not want regeneration.

The irony achieved through the use of the inversion of the traditional seasonal symbolism is heightened in lines 8-18 by the recording of Marie's imperceptive understanding of the seasons. Summer brings surprise and delight; winter at the archduke's brings childish pleasure and fears; and that is all the seasons signify. The final line, "I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter," suggests that Marie, like her contemporaries, seeks a moment of pleasure, that for her the seasons do not form a living cycle, and that the bareness of winter will not be endured out of anticipation of the regenerative force of spring.

Eliot satirizes Madame Sosostris through her diction; line 44, "Had a bad cold," changes the connotations of the next line, "Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe." The change in connotation focuses the reader's attention on the hyperbole, "the wisest woman in Europe." Her claim to clairvoyance is further undercut by her inability to find the Hanged Man, by her imperceptive and misleading command to fear death by water, by her summary treatment of her client, and by her sudden lapse into business talk. Above all, Madame Sosostris is a business woman, who fears the police and is careful to protect her business: -- "One must be careful these days." The satiric technique is much like Chaucer's in portraying the Prioress. Religion has become a commodity to be bought and sold; modern man regards religion as magic; modern man seeks a painless, inefficacious regeneration: Madame Sosostris.

Spring and Madame Sosostris both push the past and the meaning it found in life into the present. Perhaps the most significant satiric device Eliot uses in The Waste Land is his use of allusions to equate the present with the past. For instance, when the narrator encounters Stetson, he says, "You were with me in the ships at Mylae." Obviously, Stetson, a modern man, did not fight in the First Punic War; the allusion here serves to tie Stetson to a kind of economic warfare, for the First Punic War found its impetus in a conflict of commercial interest between Carthage and Rome. The one word, "Mylae," then, establishes the tone of this passage. The mocking tone of the questions put to Stetson intensifies the satire levelled against the modern business man.

More important allusions occur in this passage when Eliot alludes to Dante's Inferno. The Thames becomes Dante's Acheron and the "Unreal City," Dante's Limbo. In this passage appear the spiritually inert souls, the automatons, the morally neutral--like the souls in Dante's Limbo neither good nor evil; they live without praise or disgrace; they exhale "sighs, short and infrequent."

This allusion to Dante's Inferno has implications for the entire first section and for the entire poem. For it appears that all of the scenes in the first section are underworld scenes. It is as though the narrator has gone to Hades to visit the dead. The epigraph of the poem suggests as much. It refers to the Sibyl, Aeneas' guide through Hades: "For once I saw with my very own eyes the Sibyl of Cumae suspended in a glass bottle, and when the boys asked her what she wanted, she responded, 'I want to die.'" If we accept the physical setting of the story, London, and the narrator as a clerk recounting his spiritual crisis during a day at work in London, as the first essay on The Waste Land argues, then, perhaps, London becomes the underworld where men suffer out their days in punishment. Eliot may be using a technique used by several writers -- the sending of a hero to the underworld-- in order to gain a perspective from which to comment on contemporary life. If so, he stands in a long tradition. Aeneas' trip to the underworld allows Vergil to praise the contemporary emperor, Augustus; Dante's venture into the Inferno allows him to expose the immorality of his contemporaries; Pope's Umbriel in the Rape of the Lock searches the gloomy Cave of Spleen and allows Pope to satirize the eighteenth-century coquette; Gulliver's visit to Glubbdubdrib allows Swift to compare unfavorably the present English legislature with the Roman Senate. Consider also Lewis Carroll's stories about Alice -- how they permit him to mock pedantry in England. And Aristophanes' and Lucian's trips to the otherworld allow them to satirize their contemporaries (cf. 9th grade Satire).

The nightmarish quality of the encounter with Stetson and the lack of spiritual perception in the scene with Madame Sosostris suggest that modern society is a hell. The snippet from the thoughts of the narrator which alludes to Ezekiel (ll. 19-30) suggests that the judgment against ancient Israel is applicable as well to modern English society. By attempting to portray English society as though it too belongs to the realm of the dead, Eliot may make such a conclusion inescapable.

Eliot is then suggesting that the present belongs spiritually if not chronologically to the past; that it is dead spiritually and has been consigned to hell. Madame Sosostris, the modern spiritual seer, has a pseudo-

Egyptian name which suggests she is a descendant of Egyptian mystery cults and has none of the spiritual awareness of her predecessors, who have failed spiritually. She is no better. The reference to Mylae in the meeting with Stetson not only suddenly wings us from the twentieth century A.D., to the third century B.C., but also equates World War I with the First Punic War, for both, Eliot implies, were basically commercial economic wars. The scene with the Hyacinth-girl works in the same fashion; a modern love affair is set in the context of a legendary and fruitless love affair. Thus it appears that the present is to be regarded as the past; we are perhaps looking at both the present and the past from the point of view of eternity. We may be participating in a kind of final judgment.

Eliot uses the same technique throughout the poem, and this accounts for his use of so many allusions. Through the myriad of allusions he compares the past with the present and suggests that the present is no better than the past, that the present, unlike much of the past, is sterile spiritually, and that the present could even learn from the past and its myths. Through such a use of allusions Eliot forces his reader to take a different perspective when he views modern society, a view that corrects the moral and spiritual astigmatism and nearsightedness of modern man. From a more distant point of view, the present looks different.

If, for instance, we look at the passage describing the modern Cleopatra at the beginning of Part II, we have several allusions, allusions to echoes of Shakespeare, to Pope's description of Belinda at her dressing table in the *Rape of the Lock*, to Middleton's *Women Beware Women*, to the legends of Philomel, Cupid, Dido, Venus, Medusa, Bacchus. All of these allusions create the irony in the passage; the modern attitude toward sex, which is an emblem here for the desire or concupiscence mentioned in line 3, results in a terrible and trivial destiny, a miserably small version of the kind of destiny that Cleopatra and Dido, for instance, faced. This introductory passage with its allusions supplies the framework in which we are to judge the succeeding scenes of the nervous girl and her lover, of the player of chess or the prostitute, and of the women in the tavern. Eliot does not allow us to forget the context in which we are to judge those scenes, for the last line of the section is a quotation from *Hamlet*, Ophelia's farewell to Claudius and Gertrude. Claudius is an Elizabethan representative of the kind of desire and concupiscence displayed in Part Two of *The Waste Land*. The unleashed desire of Claudius and its consequences lead Ophelia to suicide. The implication in Eliot's poem is that all the characters portrayed in "Game of Chess" face the same end, spiritually, if not physically. Just as Claudius, Cleopatra, and Philomel's lover, Tereus, create a hell for themselves and others, so do the modern characters depicted by Eliot. But modern man does not know he is in Hell.

In "The Fire Sermon," Eliot continues the same technique. In the introductory passage of this section, the desire and concupiscence described in the previous section is again weighed and is again judged. The ritual of desire continues in the present as it has in the past. Just as Marvel's narrator in "To His Coy Mistress" hears the winged chariot of time at his back, so Eliot's narrator hears a cold blast at his back. Just as Actaeon followed his desire and the sounds of hunting to Diana, so Sweeney follows his desire and the sounds of traffic to Mrs. Porter. And we are still in Hell. Tiresias, the blind Theban soothsayer, "throbbing between two lives," has, he tells us, "walked among the lowest dead." Tiresias becomes the all-seeing prophet; he has seen the past and divines the future. He is a character who sees things from an eternal perspective and is able to apply to all ages eternal values. In his judgment the present comes off no better than the past. He was, after all, as the students learned in the 9th-grade unit on the epic, Odysseus' guide in the underworld, the one who told Odysseus how to get home and create a new society; he was the voice of wisdom, the man who knew all desire, male and female, the man who understood all folly and all misplaced religion. He was the Sibyl of Homer's world and now he walks in the Hell of the modern world. He sees that the sailor who comes home from the sea in this society is not Odysseus come home to cleanse his society but the young carbuncular man who comes to end the feast and do a wooden "rape": no Penelope here and no cleansing. Just as the Istaelites wept on the banks of the Babylonian River, so Eliot's narrator weeps "by the waters of Leman." Just as Alonso greedily usurped Prospero's rightful kingdom and shipwrecked, so the modern businessman, represented by Eugenides and the Phoenician Sailor, will shipwreck. All this is excellent matter for work in classical myth, and we should be informed on it to understand the meaning of the modern narrative.

The Thames as described in Section IV, is, as has been suggested, the counterpart of Dante's Acheron. Our narrator is still in Hell; he cannot recross the Thames; he must weep like an Israelite captive in Babylon. The descriptions (lines 266-290) of the river's present appearance and the driftwood it carries are set beside descriptions of the river down which Queen Elizabeth, like Cleopatra going down the Nile, and her lover, Leicester, floated. But the Elizabethan river offers a contrast to the petty sordidness of the modern river; tt may not be morally better, but is at least grand. Elizabeth and Leicester's affair is contrasted to those of the river-maidens, the modern, unchaste nymphs--those who "raised [their] knees / Supine on the floor of the narrow canoe," those who have nothing to resent, those who can "connect nothing with nothing."

The section entitled "The Fire Sermon," which alludes to a sermon preached by Buddha in which he admonishes his listeners to purge themselves of carnal lusts and sin-producing desires that prevent regeneration, ends on a hopeful note and represent a change in Eliot's technique. The line-- "To Carthage then I came"--represents a kind of transition in tone and in technique. Carthage is the home of Dido, the fiery and lustful mistress of Aeneas who presented a stumbling block for him in his search to fulfill the destiny ordained by the gods.Carthage, Augustine says, is called a "caldron of unholy loves." But the fire of desire can also become a purgatorial fire; it is also a kind of purgatory. The line-- "O Lord, thou pluckest me out"--refers to the act of grace, to the having of such holy desires; it suggests not only how Augustine overcame misplaced desire, but how modern man can. Fire changes from an emblem for lust and concupiscence to one of spiritual refinement. A change in technique accompanies the change in tone. Eliot finds in the past a solution to the problems of the present. It is as though Eliot's narrator encounters, in the realms of the dead, Buddha and Augustine and from them obtains the elixir of life.

The theme of regeneration is explicitly dealt with in "Death by Water," although the regeneration process here employs not fire, but water imagery. The use of allusion continues. Phelbas, the Phoenician, a representative of an ancient commercially oriented society, in his death by water is purged of "profit and loss," of a view of life governed by avarice and desire in general. The words "Gentile or Jew" allude to I Cor. 12-13("For by one

Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles"). This reinforces the implications of the final lines of "The Fire Sermon"--that spiritual death must precede spiritual regeneration. The futility of a life governed by desire, whether in the present or in the past, ends in undergoing death by water, enduring the anguish of regeneration, anticipating the arrival of spring. Eliot may be suggesting that if the present is viewed from the distant perspective of a journey to a satiric underworld, modern man discovers not only the consequences of a life ruled by the appetites and passions but also how to purge himself of these desires.

The salutary death by water is not easy; even after being plucked out of the cauldron of his desires, man remains man; he does not become an angel. Thus in the early part of "What the Thunder Said," the narrator, together with his society, faces severe doubts about the efficacy of death by water. The dryness and sterility of the waste land, or hell, in which the narrator wanders and in which there is only "sterile thunder without rain" forebodes a bad end for society. It is a society that has forgotten the injunction of the Preacher to "remember now thy Creator" before the "grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail because man goeth to his long home" and "the dust returns to the earth." Modern man's desire for regeneration has degenerated. Thus, "Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London", representatives of various heritages in Western civilization, become "unreal." All western civilization has become a hell. The widening of the vision from London to include all of the western world does not reveal a paradise, but only the extent of the hell.

However, in the "decayed hole among the mountains"—an escape from Hades -- in which there appears to be nothing but wind because of the narrator's having become accustomed to the inferno, there comes rain, water, regeneration. Interestingly this "hole among the mountains " leads to a plain in India, in the East, outside Western civilization.

But again the Hades motive returns; even as the thunder speaks, the narrator perceives a hell within himself. He, like modern society, is too prudent to *give*. The only possible giving appears to be the giving in to passion; giving is but a giving in to passion. To *sympathize* is nigh impossible; the narrator is imprisoned in the hell of his ego like Dante's Ugolino; he may hear the key turning in the cell beneath his but he cannot escape; like Shakespeare's Coriolanus, he alienates himself from his fellow men convinced no one but he is good. *Self-control* is evidently possible. The image of the boat, which relates back to "Death by Water," suggests that self-control is the place to begin. Notice the subjunctive mood: "Your heart *would have* responded / Gaily, when invited, beating obedient / to controlling hands.

"What the Thunder Said then, provides the narrator with an elixir of life; he now knows where to begin -- with self-control which will then allow him to sympathize and, ultimately, to practice love. There is hope even though western civilization is "falling down falling down falling down," even though its dust is returning to earth. Regeneration may be impossible but it is no longer categorically impossible: the fire and water of purgatory have purged him of purely selfish desire. He has now a desire to become like the swallow -- a desire for spring. It is this desire, a kind of desire different from that portrayed by the characters in "A Game of Chess," which allows the speaker to have faith and hope even though the tower of Babel has fallen in ruins. It may appear to his society a mad hope, but he, like Hieronymo, must find some kind of order, some kind of meaning in a disorganized, crumbling and evil world; he will have his revenge in finding that order and meaning.

The materialistic vision will not prevail.

COMPOSITION EXERCISES:

1. To the teacher: You may want to pass out the following to the students as a composition exercise:

Sinclair Lewis is not only a great satirist but also a great stylist. In fact, it is through his style that he achieves greatness as a satirist. Consider the following paragraph from Chapter 11:

Though he exulted, and made sage speculations about locomotive horsepower, as their train climbed the Maine mountainridge and from the summit he looked down the shining way among the pines; though he remarked, "Well, by golly!" when he discovered that the station at Katadumcook, the end of the line, was an aged freight-car; Babbitt's moment of impassioned release came when they sat on a tiny wharf on Lake Sunasquam, awaiting the launch from the hotel. A raft had floated down the lake; between the logs and the shore, the water was transparent, thin-looking, flashing with minnows. A guide in black felt hat with trout-flies in the band, and a flannel shirt of a peculiarly daring blue, sat on a log and whittled and was silent. A dog, a good country dog, black and woolly gray, a dog rich in leisure and in meditation, scratched and grunted and slept. The thick sunlight was lavish on the bright water, on the rim of gold-green balsam boughs, the silver birches and tropic ferns, and across the lake it burned on the sturdy shoulders of the mountains. Over everything was a holy peace.

Lewis here displays his ability to satirize while appearing to sympathize. He could have easily destroyed his apparent sympathy by more explicitly exposing his character's folly and misdirection. Lewis pretends sympathy by pretending to record Babbitt's romantic, "poetic" feelings as they actually come to him, but he satirizes through his diction and grammatical devices. Notice these words, "exulted," "sage speculations," "moment of impassioned release,""a holy peace." Notice the use of expansion devices, especially in the sentence about the dog: "A dog, a good country dog, black and wooly gray, a dog rich in leisure and meditation"; then notice that this dog "scratched and grunted and slept." Some of the satiric effect is achieved by the use of climax in the first sentence through the use of the two concessive "though" clauses. Notice the building toward climax of each of the words or phrases given single underlining and the anticlimatical effect of the words and phrases given double underlining.

In order to gain even more understanding of Lewis' stylistic technique, write a *short* essay, in which you describe the reactions of a character to a particular situation. First describe the character's reactions sympathetically. Then describe them without sympathy for the character. Then rewrite the passage attempting to do as Lewis does, pretending sympathy, but exposing the character's folly. Use Lewis' devices of imposing a lavish poetic diction on things that are nothing much; use his devices of diction and of systematic expansion to make your point. You might wish to write about a minister looking at a farmer's crops, about a farmer looking over a business man's stock of merchandise, about a business man looking at a church building.

Or, if you wish, you might rewrite the paragraph quoted above, first sympathizing with Babbitt and then not sympathizing at all.

2. To the teacher: *you may wish to pass out the following as a composition exercise*:

There are many devices that an author can use in order to satirize a society. One device, for instance, might be to send a young man who is trying to learn to cope with the world to the underworld. There he might encounter the souls of men who have lived before him and who presumably would be able to offer him sage advice on how to get along in the world. Their advice will expose the folly of modern society.

Write a short fictional account in which you send a young, aspiring hero into the underworld. When he is in the underworld, have him encounter a Babbitt or Gatsby who offers him advice on how to succeed. The young man is innocent and inexperienced; he may wish to question the wisdom of his advisors. Remember, the point of your fiction is to satirize modern society.

3. To the teacher: *You may wish to pass out the following as a composition exercise*:

One of the most notable things about *The Great Gatsby* is the general and rather imprecise way in which Fitzgerald describes scenes. Take for example the opening paragraphs of Chapter III. The scenes described here are not filled with a great amount of detail. Contrast for a moment one of Balzac's fantastically detailed and minute descriptions. There is no attempt on Fitzgerald's partat verisimilitude, at realism. The gardens are "blue," the orchestra plays "yellow" cocktail music. It is as though Fitzgerald, or Nick, the narrator, is standing at a great distance from the object; as though Nick describes the phenomenon as it appears to him in a glance, in a moment. Indeed, it is that instantaneous impression that he gives us, not a close scrutiny of the object, not even a minute recording of his reactions to the scene, as Wordsworth might have done. Things blur together momentarily in the perceptions of Nick.

Your teacher might wish to illustrate Fitzgerald's technique by having you study paintings by Cezanne and Manet or by having you listen to a composition by Debussy, say *Prelude to an Afternoon of a Faun*.

Now re-read the passage by Fitzgerald. Notice in this passage the use of coordinating conjunctions. The use of these conjunctions allows Fitzgerald to "pile up" objects in an apparent jumble of objects: " . . . men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars"; " . . . spiced baked hams crowed against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold"; "but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols. And cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums"; " . . . and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair bobbed in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile"; "the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions . . . and enthusiastic meetings between women . . . ."

Fitzgerald seems to be more interested in the momentary, the transitory perception of a thing than in the thing itself. Write an essay in which you describe a scene, e.g. a party, a parade, a football game, a large gathering of people, a mountain, a lake, in which you strive for a general, blurred, momentary impression of the object. You might find the use of coordinating conjunctions helpful. Also you will probably discover that your sentences will not employ much subordination, not many levels of generality. If you find it difficult to fulfill such an assignment you might write a descriptive essay which records many details, which attempts "realism" and then remove the details. Or your teacher might provide you with a passage of prose that attempts a realistic description and allow you to rewrite the passage attempting to create an impression like that of Fitzgerald's passage.

4. To the teacher: *You may wish to pass out the following as a composition exercise*:

After you have read and studied Eliot's *The Waste Land*, write a short satire of some aspect of modern society in order to expose attitudes that lead to foolish actions. For instance, you may wish to comment on some aspect of school life: social conventions, classroom behavior, curriculum. Try to use a technique like Eliot's, producing the satire by setting the scene in the underworld and by using , if possible, legendary or historical characters. A day at school, for instance, might form the basic structure for such a piece; the school building might be the inferno or underworld, and the work a student does there may suggest the creation of infernal scenes -- reading about Benedict Arnold or Aaron Burr or John Wilkes Booth or Sherman, hearing a song, looking at a picture -- which compares contemporary character types to these men in order to point out how contemporary actions and attitudes accepted as good are, in fact, evil. Ideally, the student will develop the theme of his composition through a series of apparently unrelated scenes.

5. In the opening lines of *The Waste Land* Eliot plays with the connotations that spring and winter usually carry. Here is a passage from Thoreau's *Walden* in which he exults in the coming of spring:

The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the blue-bird, the song-sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations? The brooks sing carols and glees to the spring . . . . The sinking sound of melting snow is heard in all dells and the ice dissolves apace in the ponds. The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire . . . as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun . . . -- the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass-blade, like a long green ribbon streams from the sod into the summer, checked indeed by the frost, but anon pushing on again, lifting its spear of last year's hay with the fresh life below . . . . it is almost identical with that, for in the growing days of June, when the rills are dry, the grass blades are their channels, and from year to year the herds drink at this perennial green stream, and the mower draws from it betimes their winter supply. So our human life but dies down to its root, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity.

Obviously, the tone here is one of joy, of happiness, of gratitude because of the return of spring. Ask the students to examine carefully the opening lines of The Waste Land and then rewrite this paragraph attempting to change the tone from one of joy to one of dread, from one of hope to one of futility. They might do well to begin with the last sentence, for that sentence contains the most important term of the analogy. Then, the description of natural objects can be changed accordingly.
(Note: The teacher may wish to substitute for this paragraph the opening lines of Chaucer's "Prologue." If he does, it might be well to point out that going on pilgrimages is an attempt to gain spiritual renewal.)

6. Ask the students to reread the section of the last chapter in which the old man shows Nick Gatsby's "Schedule and Resolves." Then, remind the students of Ben Franklin's similar attempt, which he records in his Autobiography. Read to the students, if they cannot obtain copies of the Autobiography, Franklin's reasoning behind this attempt and his comments on his successes and failures. After some discussion of Franklin, ask the students to write what pretends to be an autobiographical account by Gatsby, in which he comments on why he undertook this discipline and on his success and failure. (One could perhaps do the same kind of thing with Babbitt.) The students will need to be reminded that Franklin was an old man when he wrote his Autobiography, and that Gatsby never really emerges from his youthful illusions of grandeur. The student should be urged to write his essay so that it becomes apparent that Gatsby is deceiving himself. That is, the autobiographical account should be satirical, but not apparently so by intention.

Critical Composition Exercises:

1. Reproduce for the students W.H. Auden's "The Unknown Citizen" and after this poem has been discussed, ask the students to write a short essay in which they compare Auden's satiric technique with that of Lewis. The teacher should probably limit the Lewis material to one chapter, or preferably to a section of a chapter.

2. One of the most notable aspects of Lewis' novel is that there is no single plot that holds together the more or less set pieces which comprise the novel. The only real unifying factor is Babbitt. Thus, this novel might be said to have an episodic construction like that of the epic, or of a novel like Don Quixote, which admittedly is patterned after the epic. But Babbitt is a kind of inverted epic, for the hero lacks the traditional virtues associated with the epic hero. Ask the students to write an essay in which they discuss the way in which Babbitt's career is a thread upon which Lewis strings together a series of ironic essays and episodes about American middle-class culture in the 1920's.

3. One of the criticisms of Lewis' Babbitt is that it is all condemnation, that although he reveals the faults of the materialistic society depicted in the novel, there is, says a critic, "no suggestion of the

direction . . . from which salvation may come." Ask the students to defend or attack this comment. Perhaps the assignment should be prefaced with a discussion in which the students attempt to find the values Lewis must have in order to satirize Babbitt. That is, one can hardly write a satire if he does not have some idea of the way things can improve; therefore, so this reasoning would go, Lewis must have a complete set or hierarchy of values.

4. One of the genres that has been popular in the history of literature is the character. The character is a short composition which attempts to delineate or define the qualities of a class of individuals -- those attitudes and patterns of action which set one class of people off from other classes. The differentia may be economic, moral, social. Here is part of a character on the "Inept Man" by Theophrastus:

   > Ineptness is a tendency to do socially permissible things at the wrong time. The inept man comes to confide in you when you are busy. He serenades his mistress when she is ill. He asks a man to act as his guarantor who has just money by standing surety for someone else. He comes into court as a witness when the case is over. At a wedding he inveighs against women. He proposes a walk to someone who has just arrived after a long journey. He brings a higher bidder to a tradesman who has closed a deal. He will tell a long story to people who already know it by heart.

   After a discussion in which the students are led to see that what makes the character work is reference to concrete actions which display typical attitudes and patterns of action, ask the students to write a character of "The Cultural Boob," "The American Businessman," "The Booster," "The Joiner," "The Reformer" or something of a like nature. The character should find its basis in Babbitt and should lead the students to an analysis of Babbitt and his fellow Americans.

5. Ask the students to determine in a short essay who is the hero of The Great Gatsby, Gatsby or Nick. Suggest that they support their position by citing incidents and passages from the work itself.

6. Suggest to the students that the use of the "East" as a setting for the novel and the use of a Midwesterner as a narrator may be of some importance in The Great Gatsby. Ask the students to write an essay in which they attempt to describe what Fitzgerald associates with the East and with the Midwest and which of the two he prefers and why he prefers it.

7. Perhaps the clause, "If personality is an unbroken series of gestures," is a key to the technique Fitzgerald uses in his portrayal of characters. Ask the students to write an essay in which they investigate the way Fitzgerald portrays one character in order to see if he depicts him according to the dictum, "personality is an unbroken series of gestures."

8. Gatsby is not an attractive man, except for his rather flamboyant actions. Morally he is rather repulsive. Ask the students to write an essay in which they attempt to explain how Fitzgerald manages to make the reader sympathetic towards Gatsby.

9. *The Waste Land* presents many difficulties for the reader; the most elementary problem is probably that of syntax. Ask the students to select a passage, say "Death by Water" or the passage with which "What the Thunder Said" opens, or one of the passages which comes immediately after one of the commands at the end of the poem. Then suggest that they analyze the syntax in an attempt to see what grammatical units Eliot tends to elide. The students might be encouraged to render the poetry in prose with all the grammatical units included and then to comment on the different effect produced by the poetry and by the prose versions.

10. *The Waste Land* is a satire. Ask the students to select one scene and then analyze it in an attempt to determine as precisely as possible exactly what Eliot is satirizing.

11. Ask the students to write an essay in which they defend or attack the following statement: "*The Waste Land* is a poetic jigsaw puzzle; but even after the pieces are put in place, no clear picture results. Therefore, almost any jigsaw puzzle is more pleasing and more rewarding than *The Waste Land*."

12. Faulkner once said that man will not only endure but will prevail. Suggest that the students attempt to determine whether or not *The Waste Land* is as optimistic as Faulkner's statement. Or does Eliot even allow that man will endure?

(4)

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

MAN AND NATURE: THE SEARCH FOR FORM

Grade 11

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Experimental Materials
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center

MAN AND NATURE: THE SEARCH FOR FORM

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   D. Cather and Frost: The treatment of sin and loneliness and American materialism
      1. Sin and loneliness
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   C. Achieved order and society
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V. Composition exercises

VI. Bibliographies
   A. Cather
   B. Frost

CORE TEXTS:

Cather, Willa, My Antonia, Sentry Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, Co. 1918) $1.80

Frost, Robert, A Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems, with an Introduction and Commentary by Louis Untermeyer, (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960) W556 - 60¢

I. Background:

In the units which treat the use of satire, allegory, allegorical romance, and autobiography by American writers we have encountered difficulties with the concept of genre itself. For instance, T. S. Eliot, Sinclair Lewis, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, as satirists, do not write according to a clearly discernible rhetoric and set of conventions as do Pope, Dryden, and Swift (who are considered in the twelfth grade unit, "Augustan Satire.") And Hawthorne, Melville, Twain, and Faulkner all write works which are to some degree allegorical and which may be seen, perhaps, as allegorical romances. Yet, even though we detect conventional patterns and conventional symbols, we cannot assume that they are to be read in conventional ways. These writers make use of conventional symbolism but tend to use it in a private, sometimes idiosyncratic, fashion. For instance, when we encounter Hawthorne's or Melville's use of Christian religious symbolism, we cannot refer to a public iconography for interpreting the symbol--at least not with the same security as we can in reading Spenser. Rather their works themselves redefine the symbols, e.g., the Dark Wood, the Scarlet Letter, or Adam.

There is, in American letters and also in late nintheenth- and twentieth-century British letters, the development of an art which does not employ a public language shared by artist and audience, the kind of language used in the art of classical Greece and Rome and the art of earlier periods in England. This literature is not shaped so definitely by fixed and limited senses of form as that written, say, in classical Rome, or in Elizabethan or eighteenth-century England. For instance, the modern artist does not depend so much, perhaps cannot depend, upon his audience's knowing that a flat character in a comedy should be read in a certain way, that a grotesque in a comedy should be read in a certain other way, that the mythical characters in an epic should be read as allegorical, or that the central characters of a tragedy or an epic should be read as historical and exemplary. In the earlier periods these clues helped to identify the genre so that one would know the game that the artist was playing; they are gradually given up by nineteenth and twentieth century artists who instead establish the game they are playing and the terms on which they wish to play it within their own works.

II. Overview:

A. The disappearance of genre and the search for a personal meaning in things:

This unit, like the preceding ones in this series, focuses on artists outside the framework of any fixed genre except the very vague and general genres of the novel, in the case of Willa Cather, and of poetry in the case of Frost. Approaching their works by means of genre is not profitable, because of the substitution of private conventions for public ones, a substitution we have already described. We will view Frost and Cather from a thematic point of view--and as artists searching for a form implicit in their materials.

We might get at the common themes that inform the works of Frost and Cather by looking at their relationship to the themes which we have discussed in previous units; Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman, we discovered, were close observers of the natural world because they saw it as containing the signature of the Deity, because they took every phenomemon in the material world as a sign of a world beyond the material--the world of the divine. The artistic technique of these writers depends upon an epistemological faith that the seen is merely a signature of what is. All of them say that the Divine may be seen in a forest, on a trip through the Alps, or in a grain of sand. Frost and Cather, however, do not look upon the universe in a sacramental way; they do not claim that the "seen" world is a symbol for an invisible one, and their creation of symbolism depends instead upon the fact that objects in the seen world may evoke certain subjective associations, associations which have their source in an imaginative response to objects. The controlled response somehow both reflects the subjective self and gets at the form of the object out there, but it does not get at anything transcendent.

B. The creation of resonances and the search for a personal meaning; Frost and Cather's view of nature:

The description of the way in which Frost and Cather in their writing create symbolic resonances for natural objects cannot be accomplished adequately through general statements. It requires a look at a typical poem by Frost and at some typical passages from Cather.

Frost's most famous poem ends: "The woods are lovely, dark, and deep./ And I have miles to go before I sleep,/ And miles to go before I sleep." The "lovely dark and deep" woods arouse a sense of the mysterious but that mysteriousness depends on the imaginative perception of the observer and the reader. Nothing is said about the mysteriousness, darkness, or deepness of the woods in the eye of God or as permitting one to understand something about the world beyond time. Rather, the loveliness, darkness, and deepness create a hypnotic quality suggesting to the observer that perhaps he ought to stay to see them--to stay and stay--almost suggesting to him in Keats' words that it "Would be sweet to die, to cease upon the midnight with no pain."

But the woods are not really a symbol for death or its hypnotic quality. They only contain a suggestion of this for this observer, a suggestion as to the meaning of any esthetic experience, any beautiful experience, that contains within it a destructive element. The next two lines read: "But I have promises to keep,/ And miles to go before I sleep," the first line simply suggesting that the observer thinks of promises which he has made, that his home is a good distance away and that he ought to go home; the second going deeper into the realm of suggestion.

The repetition of the line, "And I have miles to go before I sleep," is obviously more meditative in tone. The narrator seems to wish to savor the words, "And I have promises to keep," by repeating their tag-end as if the promises required a deeper consideration of the distance between the woods and getting home in some figurative sense. Critics have often suggested that "sleep" in the last line refers to death, but this is not necessarily the case and Frost has denied it. The point is that the narrator has a sense of hierarchy of obligation; there are obligations beyond immediate ones; he senses that he is headed somewhere beyond the immediate object of his perception--the deathlike snow--or of his travel--his home. Because of his perception of the responsibilities which lie beyond the present, but not outside of time, he rejects the static, the perhaps destructive, woods which are before him. Thus, narrator, woods, promises, and end of journey acquire a series of possible resonances beyond themselves, but each resonance is only possible, subjective, not insisted upon; and there is no suggestion that it is 'built into nature,' as there would be in Emerson or Thoreau. The observer discovers it because he is alive, not because an oversoul like him put it there.

Here natural beauty is not a means to anything; it is instead a kind of snare.

In general the unshaped natural world, for Frost, is certainly not to be regarded as sacramental, and from man's point of view, perhaps not a creative thing. Frost is instead interested in how man relates the social organism to the organism of nature. He avoids, on one hand, the sentimentalism of the man who says, "Nature is all good, let us return to nature and subject ourselves completely to her influences, and we will recover the golden age," and on the other hand, the materialism of the man who says, "Nature is simply a bundle of clay to be disposed by man for his personal and selfish designs."

In Frost's poems the human world has to work out its own pattern, discovering pattern in the natural world, while always recognizing the exigencies of the natural world--that the natural world may go its own way and destroy the patterns which men discover. It is Frost's faith that a nature red in tooth and claw will never destroy the pattern-finding capacity in man, his mind, even if it warps and destroys his body. One may summarize this aspect of Frost's vision with a poem which he wrote rather late in life:

Sea waves are green and wet,
But up from where they die,
Rise others vaster yet,
And those are brown and dry.

They are the sea made land
To come at the fisher town,
And bury in solid sand
The men she could not drown.

She may know cove and cape,
But she does not know mankind
If by any change of shape,
She hopes to cut off mind.

Men left her a ship to sink:
They can leave her a hut as well;
And be but more free to think
For the one more cast off shell.

This same interest in man's relationship to nature appears in Willa Cather's works. One of Cather's dominant themes is the civilizing of the frontier, the effort of the European immigrant to find a place among the previous Americanized immigrants; in his efforts to translate private vision into viable civic or family pattern. Her work renders a natural world which in itself is beautiful but primarily beautiful insofar as the natural and human worlds interpenetrate and the human finds simplicity, form and pattern in the natural. One may illustrate this in Cather from the story "Neighbor Rosicky," whose chief character, Neighbor Rosicky, is a Czech immigrant who comes to Nebraska and who provides the story's point of view. He is an entirely sympathetic character. In characterizing the city, which is altogether a human creation, Rosicky says:

> "In the country if you had a mean neighbor, you could keep off his land and make him keep off yours. But in the city, all the foulness and

> misery and brutality of your neighbors was part of your life. The worst things he had come upon in his journey through the world were human-depraved and poisonous specimens of man. To this day he could recall certain terrible faces in the London streets. There were mean people everywhere, to be sure, even in his own country town here. But they weren't tempered, hardened, sharpened, like the treacherous people in cities who live by grinding down or cheating or poisoning their fellow-men. He had helped to bury two of his fellow workmen in the tailoring trade, and he was distrustful of the organized industries that see one out of the world in big cities. Here, if you were sick, you had Doctor Ed to look after you; and if you died, fat Mr. Haycock, the kindest man in the world, buried you."

On the other hand, the silence of the infinite uncivilized plains of Nebraska terrified Cather; her vision of what might be taken as her Garden of Eden is rendered near the end of "Neighbor Rosicky." The doctor in the story looks out upon a farm and graveyard where Neighbor Rosicky lies buried; here the human and the natural interpenetrate.

> "A sudden hush had fallen on his [the doctor's] soul. Everything here seemed strangely moving and significant, though signifying what, he did not know. Close by the wire fence stood Rosicky's mowing-machine, where one of the boys had been cutting hay that afternoon; his own work-horses had been going up and down there. The new-cut hay perfumed all the night air. The moonlight silvered the long, billowy grass that grew over the graves and hid the fence; the few little evergreens stood out black in it, like shadows in a pool. The sky was very blue and soft, the stars rather faint because the moon was full.
>
> For the first time it struck Doctor Ed that this was really a beautiful graveyard. He thought of city cemeteries; acres of shrubbery and heavy stone, so arranged and lonely and unlike anything in the living world. Cities of the dead, indeed; cities of the forgotten, of the 'put away.' But this was open and free, this little square of long grass which the wind forever stirred. Nothing but the sky overhead, and the many-coloured fields running on until they met the sky. The horses worked here in summer; the neighbours passed on their way to town; and over yonder, in the cornfield, Rosicky's own cattle would be eating fodder as winter came on. Nothing could be more undeathlike than this place; nothing could be more right for a man who had helped to do the work of great cities and had always longed for the open country and had got to it at last. Rosicky's life seemed to him complete and beautiful."

In this scene we have not only Cather's picture of the human community as organically related to the natural community, the kind of sense which Frost develops, but also a perception of and minute, accurate description of every detail the scene is, together with the creation of resonances beyond the literal details themselves. The description of the scene suggests not only that the ideal human community exists in continuity, that change is slow and that continuity from past to the present is sustained by customs, traditions, attitudes, and neighborly loyalties. If one compares the passage with "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" one has a sense that Cather is viewing a rather tamed nature--Frost also sometimes speaks of this nature--and as in Frost, all that is is nature. The life that continues is not resurrected life.

Nature, for both Cather and Frost, is symbolic only insofar as the individual human sensibility endows it with meaning; nature without the human community and the human community without nature are both meaningless. There is necessarily an organic relationship to the natural world, and this relationship begets an interest in the close description of what the natural world is like. Because of this interest both Cather and Frost have been called realists. Although the word "realist" is not a terribly meaningful word in modern literary criticism, it may be useful to look at the way in which Frost and Cather look at the fine details, the appearances, in the natural world.

C. Personal meaning: the search for form in things and the love of region:

Somewhere Cather writing about the nature of art said, "Art, it seems to me, should simplify. That indeed is very nearly the whole of the higher artistic process; finding what conventions of form and what details one can do without and yet preserve the spirit of the whole so that all that one has suppressed and cut away is there to the reader's conscicusness as much as if it were in type on the paper." The passage describes Cather's technique; that is, what she does is to select fine details in a scene; such details as will first of all convey the whole scene with a particular vividness into the imagination of the reader and also give to the reader a sense of the overtone--the meaning, the emotional resonance, the subjective sense of significance--that a particular spectator or observer finds within a scene.

It may be well to look at some of Cather's descriptions to see how she does this. In O Pioneers! is the following description:

> "The variegated fields are all one color now; the pastures, the stubble, the roads, the sky are the same leaden gray. The hedgerows and trees are scarcely perceptible against the bare earth, whose slaty hue they have taken on. The ground is frozen so hard that it bruises the foot to walk on the roads or the ploughed fields. It is like an iron country, and the spirit is oppressed by its rigor and melancholy. One could easily believe that in that dead landscape the germs of life and fruitfulness were extinct forever."

Notice that Cather does simplify. The fields are not all one color. Anyone who has seen Nebraska in the winter knows that the fields are a great variety of browns and yellows and reds. The pastures, stubbles, roads, and sky are never all the same leaden gray. However, they are often generally of a slaty color, and the color gray communicates the subjective sense of a certain melancholy, a certain monotonousness, boringness:

> "The hedgerows and trees are scarcely perceptible against the bare earth whose slaty hue they have taken on. The ground is frozen so hard that it bruises the foot to walk on the roads or the ploughed fields."

Notice again that Cather has very little interest in the details of what the ground is like except for the fact that it is so hard that it bruises the foot to walk on the roads or the plowed fields. The idea of bruising the foot, which is a Biblical idea, comes in here as another evocation of the harshness of the country. Certainly there would be sandy fields where this would not be the case and there might be snow that would not bruise the foot. There are all kinds of things one could say about the soil aside from the fact that it is iron hard. These two details--the color and the hardness-blend together in the next sentence so that the images are fused, "It is like an iron country." The grayness and the hardness together constitute the iron of the country. "And the spirit is oppressed by its rigor, the hardness, the melancholy, the grayness. One could easily believe that in that dead landscape the germs of life and fruitfulness were extinct forever." Here we have symbolism, but symbolism of an entirely different kind from that which we found in Whitman, Thoreau, and Emerson.

Look at the following passage:

> There were none of the signs of spring for which I used to watch in Virginia, no budding woods or blooming gardens. There was only spring itself; the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere; in the sky, in the swift clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm high wind--rising suddenly, sinking suddenly, impulsive and playful like a big puppy that pawed you and then lay down to be petted. If I had been tossed down blindfold on that red prairie, I should have known that it was spring.

Throughout the passage the details are details of rhythm--the throb; restlessness; vital essence; swift clouds rising suddenly, sinking suddenly; impulsive and playful; pawing you. We don't know what the various plants are which are growing; we don't know the temperature. We know almost nothing about the detail of the scene, and yet this focusing on the rhythm of spring allows us to imagind the whole scape with a vividness and detail which is created by our mind's eye. And this imagined vividness and detail carries a kind of subjective overtone of a life force animating everything, a sugjective, symbolic value which the reference to rhythm creates.

Part of this capacity for using detail is related to Cather's tremendous sentimental attachment to Nebraska though she lived there during very little of her later life. Whether she was in France or the Southwestern United States, she would speak of the places which she visited as like Nebraska--Provence with its yellow stubble as like Campbell and Bladen near Red Cloud, the region around Arles with its geraniums as like Nebraska where there are geraniums to be potted for winter. She wrote that whenever she crossed the Missouri River coming into Nebraska the very smell of the soil tore her to pieces; that she couldn't decide which was the real and which was the fake "me," the cosmopolite or the hick.

Frost too writes about one region and he, like Cather, simplifies. One may compare Cather's gift for simplification with Frost's by looking at the poem "Mowing":

The poet evokes a complete summer day through the mention of very few images—the silence, the heat of the sun, and a few flowers; and again rhythm, this time the rhythm of scything, is important. The poet leaves out the sweat of work, the color of most of the scene, the sky. The hard work, the rhythm, the scythe whispering, the heat of sun, delight in work, the interpenetration of man and nature lead to a rejection of the world of fantasy, of excape into idleness or into wealth, or the idea that the world of work is not the Garden of Eden. (The scythe scares a bright green snake away). Gradually the description of the scene creates, through the resonances, a picture of fully successful and fruitful, satisfying labor, a picture that counteracts pictures of labor as the consequence of evil or of man's fall or labor as something to be fled from in fantasy or fairy-tale. The picture is simplified like Cather's picture of a winter as iron: a scythe sound, hay, heat of sun, a snake, all made of one texture and speaking one voice about the relationship of man and nature, of reality and paradise, of labor and "paradise lost" rejected.

Sometimes Frost writes much more detailed kinds of poems. The poem "Birches" begins almost as if it were a Dutch genre painting:

The beginning of the poem is the refined, completely objective description of a naturalist or, at least, of a nature magazine's description of some trees carried down by an ice storm. The poet is aware that he is not simplifying, that he's giving us details which do not have any particular symbolic or poetic resonance, for in lines 21 and 22 he says, "I was going to say when Truth broke in/ With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm." The birches, gradually become a kind of figure for the means that men might have for getting away from the world, for moving toward the transcendent, for attaining some kind of perspective on life. And the figure of the boy who rides up and rides down is an image for the idealism of youth and its capacity to return to interpret the world in terms of that idealism. But the poet rejects the temptation to be a transcendentalist; birches are for getting man to a perspective away from the earth and for returning one to the earth. And he rejects the temptation to state specifically what the symbolic value of the birch is. He leaves only a resonance. One senses that the point of the poem is that moving up the birch and bending it down is a creative and human action, the kind of thing that man can do in conjunction with nature. The ice storm, on the other hand, is a wholly destructive action, the kind of thing that nature may do in conjunction with itself. To move up the birch and look down is to see from a simplifying distance, not from God's perspective.

D. Cather and Frost: Treatment of Sin and Loneliness and American Materialism:

1. Sin and Loneliness

If one considers Cather and Frost in their treatment of guilt and expiation, one finds again that the two artists bear an affinity to one another and are separated in style from the writers whom we took up in the unit on sin and loneliness. If Hawthorne and Melville used traditional orthodox Christian language to bespeak attitudes quite often not orthodox Christian ones, Frost and Cather neither use the language of orthodoxy nor bespeak its attitudes.

Willa Cather quite early abandoned any orthodox religious belief, as an adolescent deciding to become a doctor and doing a series of zoological studies involving surgical experiments on animals. She fancied herself a scientist whose investigations were being inhibited by the forces of superstition--that is, organized religion. Her high school commencement speech was entitled "Superstition versus Investigation," and in it she asserted that these two forces had contended with one another since the dawn of history. She conceived of herself as one of those who belonged to the side of investigation, genius, and heresy.

Later in her life however she was profoundly attracted to the beauty of the Catholic religion. In one of her last novels Death Comes for the Archbishop, the story is of the first Archbishop of the Southwest who in 1851 began his long struggle to bring about the re-birth of the Catholic faith in the Southwest, the diocese of Santa Fe. The story tells of the effort of two men, heroes and men of faith, to bring some element of civility and civilization to the Spanish Southwest, to bring faith to the Indians, and in general to create both a good and a religious society. Cather uses the symbols of Catholic faith and worship as a kind of poetic framework which transforms the conflicts and savagery of this previously uncivilized, previously rapacious and brutal part of the United States, into something finer. And the companion novel, Shadows on the Rock, does much the same thing; it treats French-Catholic civilization in the province of Quebec in Canada. The chief characters are the Count de Frontenac, the Bishop Laval, and a druggist LeClaire. Again, the interest is in the imposition of a civil, meaningful, and humane civil order upon a wild frontier and the vehicle of that imposition is the Catholic church.

In 1922 Miss Cather entered the Episcopal church and was confirmed into the church at the same time as her parents were. It is not surprising that Willa Cather's final story was a story concerning the medieval city in which the popes dwelt during the period in which they were exiled from Rome, the city of Avignon.[1] Here the story is about a young man who works in the papal palace and understands life in terms of the vision of the Roman Catholic church; but who involves himself in blasphemy and subversive activities against the church and state; whose tongue is torn out for his blasphemy; but whose conception of himself as a wounded man or an incomplete man is erased by his confessor priest who absolves him and gives him a sense that the recovery of the sacred is as possible as its betrayal.

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[1] See George N. Kates, "Willa Cather's Unfinished Avignon Story," Willa Cather, Five Stories, New York, Vintage Books, 1956, pp. 175-214

In looking at Cather's works concerning religion and in looking at her own remarks concerning it, it is difficult to see whether her primary interest is in the institution as an agency through which the individual encounters God or whether her primary interest is in the church as the civilizing agent, as a kind of living poetry, and as a vehicle through which the lives of men are refined and made more palatable or civilized. I would incline toward the latter view. That is to say, I would say that she views the church as an aesthetic or cultural agency and loves it as such more than as a religious agency. And in her works, particularly her Nebraska works, she makes very little use of religious symbolism, very little use of the emblems, the types, and symbols which have been part of twenty centuries of western religious iconology. In Willa Cather's world there is, so far as one can see, no concern for the conception of man as an inherently limited creature and no concern for the doctrine of original sin. For her, men are evil primarily insofar as they are rapacious. Technology, capitalism, industry, rootlessness in all its rapacity--these are the primary evils of Cather's world and they are not built into mankind, but, at least in part, learned.

Something of the same kind of thing may be said concerning Robert Frost. Frost's own religious background was Swedenborgian and he knew enough of New England Calvinism. But in a conversation with Frost, the author of this unit heard him say that he regarded the Christian faith or "our faith," as he put it, as the most beautiful of the religions created by man but that he was bothered by certain things, particularly the doctrine of the Virgin birth which seemed to cast doubt on the beauty of human sexuality as he saw it. According to Lawrence Thompson,[1] Frost rejects the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. The God of his religion is a source to which the current of everything that runs away and everything that resists is paying tribute--the first mover. Thompson suggests that Frost projected the sacredness that he found in his own love-life outward upon nature and ultimately apotheosized it as God.

Frost specifically denies the kind of Platonic view of the world to which Emerson held. He does not view the world as an imperfect copy of an eternal world or believe that by looking at it one gets at the eternal world. In him, as in Cather, there is no primitivistic notion of a drifting away from a golden age or a fall. As he says, "All ages of the world are bad. All men are more-or-less limited by their environment." There is no particular emphasis upon an inherent limitation in mankind, no acceptance of a doctrine of original sin or of an original limitation in mankind (cf. "Mowing"). There is no longing for a golden age and no vision of a golden world or a heaven on earth.
Life is a matter of doing the best one can, of suffering with dignity when things go wrong, and of making the compromises which are necessary, but recognizing them as compromises made for the securing of genuine accomplishment without sacrificing principles. Genuine accomplishment is for him, as for Cather, the discovery of form in the material at hand.

2. American Materialism:

Cather and Frost, finally, might have been included in the unit on American Materialism because both have contempt for modern technocracy; for modern urban civilization; for the society which exists cut off from the fields and farm lots and from planting and reaping; for the man who is altogether dependent upon a bureaucratic organization to sustain him, the man who has no identity, no vision, and no capacity to create his own garden or his own world. Both have the same admiration for the strong who are not rapacious but rather visionaries realizing their vision in desolate and difficult places. Both are suspicious of efforts to manipulate man's environment, of industry and machines, and rapid change. Both are suspicious of tremendous concentrations of power.

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[1] Lawrence Thompson, Fire and Ice, pp. 188-190.

In The Changing Nature of Man John van den Berg characterizes the healthy society as follows:

> A research study instigated by UNESCO made it clear that a healthy community is characterized by four conditions:
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> 1. "First, all aspects of life are closely integrated,--work, for instance, is not something separate and distinct." This means that in a healthy community there are no gaps between work and recreation, work and play, work and religion, faith and desire, life and death, youth and adulthood. Everyting is bound together in one coherent totality, with no splits anywhere. Nothing stands apart.
>
> 2. "Secondly, social belonging is automatic." Everybody belongs to the community. No one is alone; no one is given an opportunity to stand alone, not even in a certain phase of life. There is no compulsion; one belongs naturally.
>
> 3. "Change is slow and continuity is sustained by attitudes, customs and institutions." Every change is so slow that no one notices a change. So stable is life that previous generations had lived naturally, and their descendants live the same life just as naturally.
>
> 4. "And lastly, the important social groupings are small."[1]

This characterization of the ideal society might have been made by either Cather or Frost; of this and of their moral views we shall have more to say as we look at each individually.

II. Cather: Her Life and Works

A. Her Early Life

Since Willa Cather is probably the finest novelist which Nebraska has produced and since these materials are materials of the Nebraska Curriculum Center which came out of the same soil as Cather, it may be appropriate here to give a partial account of Miss Cather's life as it relates to her work.

Cather's first ten years were spent in Virginia. Her family, a farm family, had its roots in the antebellum South; though its loyalties were not with the South during the Civil War--the Cathers had felt that the war could have been avoided--their manners, the social conventions according to which they lived--

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[1] John van den Berg, The Changing Nature of Man, pp. 161-162

were those of Southern, middle-class society. They participated in its politeness, its gentility, and its feeling of, on the one hand, belonging to ancient Greco-Roman civilization and of, on the other hand, requiring the exploitation of large numbers of Negroes and poor whites. Edith Lewis, who was Willa Cather's closest friend, has written concerning Cather's life in Virginia:

> Her Virginia life was one of great richness, tranquil and ordered and serene. With its freedom from all tension and nervous strain, it may have helped to give her that deep store of vitality which underlay her work. When her family ... moved west, she felt the break cruelly. But in later years she believed that for her the move was fortunate. Even as a little girl she felt something smothering in the polite, rigid social conventions of that Southern society--something factitious and unreal. If one fell in with those sentimental attitudes, those euphemisms that went with good manners, one lost all touch with reality, with truth of experience. If one resisted them, one became a social rebel. She told me once of an old judge who came to call ... and who began stroking her curls and talking to her in the playful platitudes one addressed to little girls--and of how she horrified her mother by breaking out suddenly: "I's a dang'ous nigger, I is!" It was an attempt to break through the smooth, unreal conventions about little girls--the only way that occurred to her at the moment.[1]

In 1883, when Willa was nine, the Cather family moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska, which had been settled in part by people from the Eastern part of the United States, but which was being settled increasingly, in this time, by settlers from Czechoslovakia and Sweden. Willa Cather's father took up farming for about a year and then entered the land business in Red Cloud. Her interest was not primarily in the land business but in the new settlers who had come to this part of the country, particularly in the Czechs and the Swedes, in the country itself and in the efforts to tame it--to impose upon this new land the cultural patterns of European civilizations. Perhaps she was interested most of all in literature. Her own childhood was quite similar to the childhood which she assigns to Jim Burden in My Antonia.

As a child and adolescent, Willa Cather constantly associated with intellectuals in the town of Red Cloud: she came to know a Mrs. Charles Wiener who spoke French and German and allowed her to use her fine library; she came to know well her German music teacher who taught her about European music and musicians and trained her in the history and theory of music. Though she had very little interest in actually becoming a performer, it was out of this training that she developed her life-long interest in music and particularly in the opera, an art form whose conventions impinge upon her writing. And she came to know a Mr. Uncle Billy Ducker--from England--who was in love with Latin and Greek literature, who taught her Latin and Greek, and who together with her read a series of Latin and Greek classics which were to lie in the background of her writing throughout the rest of her life. It was during this period she developed her interest in science and her faith in the spirit of free investigation, her love of opera and plays--a love which led to her later jobs as a reviewer of operas and plays both for newspapers in Lincoln, Nebraska, and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

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[1] E. K. Brown, Willa Cather, p. 5.

Miss Cather, during her high school and university years, continued to develop her interest in literature, both classical and English--particularly her interest in Virgil whose Aeneid told her of Roman piety, Roman love for transplanting civilization from one soil to another; told her also of man's capacity for relating himself to his past; and whose Georgics gave her satisfying pictures of the country and country work. She seems to have been almost equally fond of Ovid--whose myths appear everywhere in her work beneath the surface--and of Horace and the Greek lyricists who taught her style. What she loved most of all was to imagine ancient civilizations, the force of the human group in shaping a life, its relationship to the soil, and the effect upon it of its mythos. She also read the novelists of the late nineteenth century, the best of them--Flaubert, Maupassant, Henry James, Mark Twain.

In her later college years she took up the art of reviewing plays and musical performances for the Lincoln Journal. She continued her reviewing career in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she wrote for several papers, particularly the Home Monthly and the Daily Leader; in working for the Leader, she did a good deal of dramatic and operatic criticism. During this period she also taught literature at Allegheny High School in Pittsburgh. If one looks at her reviews, one sees an increasing admiration for the realistic writers of Europe and the United States--Zola, Ibsen, Frank Norris, etc. and a developing interest in the fantastic world projected by the opera which she reviewed at Carnegie Hall.

B. Cather's Works, Aside From My Antonia: The Vision of Order and the Crass Society:

In the early 1900's Willa Cather made a trip to Europe where she met a number of literary lights and came in closer touch with Flaubert and the French realists, with some of the English, among them A. E. Housman. After returning from Europe in 1903, she published her first book, a volume of poems entitled April Twilights, in which she often echoes Virgil and Horace; in 1905 she published her first fiction, a book entitled The Troll Garden.

The title page quotations in the book contrast two kinds of people--the goblin men and fairies--in two epigraphs. One, from Christina Rossetti: "We must not look at Goblin men,/ We must not buy their fruits;/ Who knows upon what soil they fed/ Their hungry, thirsty roots?" The second, from Charles Kingsley: "A fairy palace, with a fairy garden . . . inside the trolls dwell . . . working at their magic forges, making and making always things rare and strange." And the book contains two kinds of stories: stories about artists who come to live in wealthy circles and succeed in society, and stories of sensitive persons with an artistic temperament who are defeated by it, including the well-known story of "Paul's Case." The central interest of the book, however, is in the juxtaposition of persons having an intense subjective artistic vision and the rather drab world about them, and one may look upon the two epigraphs as suggesting the two sides of Willa Cather's concern. The goblins who have fed their "hungry, thirsty roots" on evil soils are the nightmares and evils of industrial civilization or the sordid urbanized world which the sensitive find about them; the trolls who dwell in fairy palaces making things rich and strange are the artists and visionaries who dwell in the realm of the imagination.

The stories which are any good in this book are the stories of the defeated artists, the artists who are prevented from bringing into existence in the real world any of what they visualize in the subjective world: the problem of the relationship between subjective vision and the sordid world which the sensitive tend to find about them concerned Willa Cather throughout her life. In these early stories, one finds the artist a persecuted man; in the later and richer ones she comes to depict the artist working, as Wordsworth would say, "Not in paint and words," but "in the very world which is our own," projecting out to, and creating in, the world of social interaction something that answers to inner vision.

After writing The Troll Garden, Willa Cather went to work for McClure's, a magazine in New York which had made its reputation in the decade before Willa Cather came to work for it primarily as a great muckraking magazine, somewhat radical in its efforts to expose crime and corruption in high places and effective in producing reforms (at first, she was put to work on some muckraking articles exposing Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the Christian Science Church). At McClure's she received the friendship and the advice of Sarah Orne Jewett; here too she began really seriously to pursue a literary career, at first as a short story writer. By 1908 she had been made managing editor of McClure's, had a handsome salary and opportunities for frequent travel from New York and for moving as she wished in the upper strata of the literary and journalistic circles in New York.

In 1911 she published her first novel, a short novel entitled Alexander's Bridge, which appeared in McClure's in three parts in 1912. Its concern is the concern of The Troll Garden, the problem of bringing vision to being in the actual world. Alexander's Bridge portrays a great builder and successful business man who had during his early life lived in touch with the plains and who suddenly in middle life discovers that he is two selves--the eastern builder and the wild, untamed western man. The submerged untamed western man gradually overcomes the eastern builder and leads him to attempt the impossible, making him unwilling to make the prudent compromises either in his life or in the building of the bridge which are required to make things safe. In the end, both the builder and his bridge are destroyed. The novel is a picture of the artist destroyed by his own unwillingness, on the one hand, to compromise with bourgeois civilization and, on the other, to abandon it completely and create another kind of life.

In 1912 Willa Cather resigned from McClure's. In 1913 she published the first of her Nebraska novels, O Pioneers! Here, for the first time, she begins to see the possibility that the artist may create in the objective world some counterpart to his own vision. The story is set in Nebraska. The heroine, Alexandra Bergson, loses her father at the opening of the story, and is thus saddled with the responsibility of caring for her mother and her three younger brothers. Little and powerless they live on what seem to be vast untamed prairies--Cather's cruel nature--over which cattle-destroying blizzards whip, through which pass hog-killing cholera, whose wild reaches are covered with rattle snakes which kill the horses, and whose nights and days are filled with the fear of wild animals and natural catastrophes. In the face of these terrors many of the pioneers give up, but the girl Alexandra does not. She gradually creates a farm, enlarges it, and transforms the farm into something better than what it was. Her vision and the vision of those about her make the countryside prosperous with the kinds of farmsteads which Cather could portray as could few other novelists.

> The shaggy coat of the prairie, which they lifted ... has vanished forever. From the Norwegian graveyard one looks out over a vast checker board, marked off in squares of wheat and corn; light and dark. Telephone wires hum along the white roads which always run

> at right angles. From the graveyard gate one can count a dozen gayly painted farmhouses; the gilded weather-vanes on the big red barns wink at each other across the green and brown and yellow fields.... There are few scenes more gratifying than a spring plowing in that country, where the furrows of a single field often be a mile in length, and the brown earth, with such a strong clean smell, and such a power of growth and fertility in it yields itself eagerly to the plow; rolls away from the shear, not even dimming the brightness of the metal, with a soft deep sigh of happiness....

Willa Cather focuses on the capacity of the imagination to create an "achieved order"--a garden--either in the world of art or in the world of the social. The garden may be the back yard; it may be a stage, or it may be a farmyard or whole community. In The Song of the Lark, Thea Kronborg begins as the daughter of a poor Swedish minister and, aspiring to become a successful opera singer, lives a life of discipline and discipline and discipline until she finally triumphs. Again there is contempt for ordinary bourgeoise society; Thea's father is a minister in a little town, such a town as would have made Babbitt feel at home.

We may skip over My Antonia for the time being.

In One of Ours, which was published in 1922 and which won a Pulitzer Prize, Willa Cather presents a farm boy from Nebraska--Claude--who seeks a more meaningful life; goes to the university; returns to the farm; is subjected to the rapacity of his avaricious father who is a bigot, a fool, and a Babbitt and who is mirrored in the girl Claude marries. Claude is taken from the surroundings, thrust into the army, and brought to France where he, for a time, glimpses a vision of what we have called the world of the imagination or the world of art, a kind of achieved order: the Gothic churches at Rouen, the organized forests of France, its fine cooking, the sensitivity of French women. At the end, the boy is killed in the war abroad and does not recognize either America or France for the grubby places that they are as seen through the novelist's eyes. The end of the novel suggests that those who lived through the war came home to a trivial and materialistic, a gross and vulgar civilization. Nothing has been won.

The next novel in the series, A Lost Lady, is a picture of a woman caught between the aesthetic vision of the pioneers and the vulgarities and materialism of the post-war generation. The heroine of the novel, the daughter of the railroading generation, belongs to the railroading "nobility," and has acquired a sophistication and a vision of what the country can be. Neither is shared by her town or by anyone around her. The lady moves from natural aristocrat to female Babbitt as she loses her place in the aristocracy and becomes the companion of a series of increasingly vulgar lovers and the victim of her alcoholism. In this case, the "vision" and reality are juxtaposed and embodied in a single individual as she moves from youth to age and from aristocrat and visionary to a barbarian and drunk.

The third novel in the series, The Professor's House, juxtaposes the two worlds represented by two houses that the professor (St. Peter) considers as possible dwelling places. The first house in which he lives is Victorian, inconvenient, and rich in cultural associations. The second house is cheap, gaudy, shallow, and meaningless. In the one house--the old house rich in vision and culture, and covered with the resins of good living--the professor is capable of continuing his scholarly career. In the new house he finds he can only do the social, conventional thing. What strengthens him in his fight for the old house is his memory of his most brilliant student, Tom Outland, who discovered in New Mexico a cliff dwellers' village perfectly preserved against the erosions of time and who had died before his scientific genius could be exploited. This boy is himself an idealist and incarnates some of the values of the old house; he is an idealist betrothed to St. Peter's daughter who embodies all the values of the new house. Appropriately, he discovers a dead civilization created by Southwestern Indian cliff dwellers in which men appear to have lived in a kind of organic unity with nature: as he says, "I had read of filial piety in the Latin poets /i.e., Virgil/ and I knew that was what I felt for this place." The place he discovers is a realization in the physical world of perfect artistic vision, pure design--no machinery, no ugliness; life is organized not in terms of man exploiting man but in terms of man supporting man: the houses in the towns of the cliff dwellers support one another. They are not individual solipsistic centers. As E. K. Brown remarks: "The Professor's House is a religious novel.... In one specimen of St. Peter's lecture we are permitted to overhear, the link between art and religion is forged in our presence.

> 'As long as every man and woman who crowded into the cathedrals on Easter Sunday was a principal in a gorgeous drama with God, glittering angels on one side and the shadows of evil coming and going on the other, life was a rich thing. The king and the beggar had the same chance at miracles and great temptations and revelations. And that's what makes men happy, believing in the mystery and importance of their own little individual lives. It makes us happy to surround our creature needs and bodily instincts with as much pomp and circumstance as possible. Art and religion (they are the same thing, in the end, of course) have given man the only happiness he has ever had.'"

In the old house and in the civilization of the cliff dwellers, Tom Outland and the professor find a life which is an embodiment of what Willa Cather understood to be at the same time art and religion--the world of design discovered in nature or realized from its exigencies. Against this world Willa Cather juxtaposes the modern; the dull; the mediocre, meaningless mechanized life of modern civilization. To this latter life the Professor St. Peter resigns himself at the end of the book.

Willa Cather's last two novels of importance, Death Comes for the Archbishop and Shadow on the Rock, we have already discussed as part of our discussion of her religious attitude.

We have traced Willa Cather's interest in the theme of the imagining of a formal and comely "troll garden" life and its realization in the world of clay and men. One of the most perspicacious remarks that has been made about Willa Cather's view of the world was made by E. K. Brown in his critical biography. We will allow him to summarize our remarks. He writes as follows:[1]

> /Willa Cather admired/ the ordered, the hierarchic, the parochial society, where the game of life is played according to hard and fast rules, with no tolerance of change or nonconformity: "She

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[1] E. K. Brown, Willa Cather, pp. 333-337.

had been one of the nonconformists in her youth; yet in her later years she found in that society certain eternal values which seemed to transcend its intolerance.

This love for the ordered and regulated mode of life in a small society sprang undoubtedly in part from the violence of Willa Cather's early uprooting from Virginia to the Divide, so that ever after she felt acutely what it means to be torn from cherished things and transported to scenes unfamiliar and wild. Willa Cather's childhood pilgrimage, and her adult pilgrimage eastward, could make her sensitive, and it did, to those pilgrims who had come from the Old World to a new land; and she could experience in all its intensity their longing for things left behind in their forsaken worlds. There was also the reverse of this: in the New World order was being created out of chaos, a new life replaced the old. Trees transplanted were nourished and grew in alien soil. One has only to remember the role that gardens play in Willa Cather's work to understand this. To have been brought up on the sprawling prairie had given her a deep fondness for the small cultivated plot, the well-kept work of art. She always remembered how the Germans in the West planted trees and hauled water and labored to make them flourish. Garden succeeds garden: the Troll Garden, the garden at Uplands, the Wunsch garden, Antonia's grape-arbor, the evil garden at Acoma, the professor's French garden set in the Middle West.

> "The Professor had succeeded in making a French garden in Hamilton. There was not a blade of grass; it was a tidy half-acre of glistening gravel and glistening shrubs and bright flowers. There were trees, of course; a spreading horse-chestnut, a row of slender Lombardy poplars at the back, along the white wall, and in the middle two symmetrical, round-topped linden trees. Masses of greenbriar grew in the corners, the prickly stems interwoven and clipped until they were like great bushes. There was a bed for salad herbs. Salmon-pink geraniums dripped over the wall. The French marigolds and dahlias were just now at their best—such dahlias as no one else in Hamilton could grow. St. Peter had tended this bit of ground for over twenty years, and had got the upper hand of it."

The transplanting of graces and traditions, like the transplanting of trees, was in fact a bringing of the unchanged, the old, into the new; not only was something of the past kept alive in the process, but it grew and flourished and took on new life. So the transplanted Bohemians and Swedes and French and Germans sought to recapture what had gone before in the midst of the wild land.

Willa Cather wanted life to be an arranged garden, she liked an achieved order; and this inevitably meant the conquest of disorder. The emphasis must be on the word conquest, for Willa Cather's books were built around the central theme of her own life--"the passionate struggle of a tenacious will." Her heroes and heroines were Alexanders and Alexandras whose names were synonymous with conquest, and it is no accident that of all of Plutarch's lives, little Cecile reads in the evenings at

Quebec the life of Alexander the Great;[1] and when, in Pittsburg, Willa Cather wrote an essay on her actress friend Lizzie Hudson Collier, she gave the aritcle the Meredithian title of "One of Our Conquerors."

C. My Antonia

My Antonia is one of the novels in which Willa Cather explores the relationship between the visionary, guided by the imagination, and the forces in society that destroy him.

In the essays which follow you will find descriptions of the way in which Miss Cather treats the town of Black Hawk as a kind of town of Babbitts and of the manner in which she treats the growing materialism of American life through the figure of the usurer, Wick Cutter. On the other hand, she attempts, in her portrayal of the two main characters, Jim Burden and Antonia, to discover a stance toward the past which will render meaningful the material of history accessible to a small Midwestern town.

Her central concern is not, however, with the destroyers, but with the makers and feeders of farm and country civilization on the frontier, those who, gifted with Virgilian pietas, bring the civilization of Europe alive anew to flower on the plain as Aneas brought Troy to Rome. Antonia's father makes the effort but makes it without being able to endure the suffering and so, having been reduced to an animal-like critter by the harsh cave-house and the mole-like existence which he encountered, he dresses himself in a musician's uniform to assert the values of the old vision and shoots himself. Jim Burden, on the other hand, in order to recover the values of the old vision goes to the East and separates himself from his soil and his roots. Antonia retains the vision and somehow by enduring and insisting recreates it in the soil of the Mid-West in a new way with its own validity. The way in which she treats materialism and the new vision, the rejection of history and its meaning are admirable discussed in the essays which follow.

/The following essay from Edward and Lillian Bloom's Willa Cather's Gift of Sympathy (Carbondale, 1962), pp. 62-68, describes Cather's view of the upside-down caste system of the Black Hawk type town and what it says about pietas toward past visions; it also describes the significance of Willa Cather's naturalism to visions of past and future comeliness./

/The following essay by Wallace Stegner from the book The American Novel, pp. 147-153, is an account of the vision of the relationship of past and present in My Antonia and of the use of point of view to make the point about the relationship./

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[1] Shadows on the Rock

[That Willa Cather used such a figure as Jim Burden as a first-person narrator to give us what her novel had to say is perhaps a tribute to the influence of Henry James and to his skill in the manipulation of point of view. But the material with which she deals and the way in which she deals with it is the consequence of her own discipline and the gradual realization, under the tutelage of Sarah Orne Jewett, that the best that she could crite would have to be written out of material of her own region, material which she had completely assimilated so that it had a genuine subjective symbolism for her. All of Cather's middle and later novels are an exploration of the materials of memory, the materials of her own memory. These materials having been turned round and round in the artist's consciousness until they acquire resonances beyond themselves.

In the E. K. Brown essay (Willa Cather, pp. 199-209) which follows, you get some picture of the kinds of materials which Willa Cather turned round as she constructed My Antonia.]

heartbreak and disaster, has woven an enchantment about the region. It is no longer a place to leave, it is a place to live in--if one has, like Antonia, the stuff of which the heroic Spaniards were made.

Her using her eyes and ears is evident in the way in which she, for instance, describes the image of the plow silhouetted against the setting sun, a scene whose significance is discussed by some critics whose remarks follow this essay; it is evident in the picture of the snow in December, a picture in which Jim takes Antonia and Ilka for a ride across the snow-covered country in a sled hand-made, and the girls enjoying the scenic cold and the dazzling light see about them, "The snow crusted in shallow terraces with tracings like ripple marks at the edges, curly waves that were the actual impressions of the stinging lash of the wind." Behind the whole passage, of course, stands the sense of the snow as sand and the wind as the sea and you have a kind of imagist concentration of precise observation. At the same time these observations have a resonance which is more than naturalistic. They have a kind of symbolic resonance, speak of the search for order and stasis in chaos. The materials which Cather observed to create _My Antonia_ are described in Mildred Bennett's _The World of Willa Cather_, pp. 46-49.

It was through her friendship with the Miner children that Willa came to know Annie. Miss Cather said in 1921:

> One of the people who interested me most as a child was the Bohemian hired girl of one of our neighbors, who was so good to me. She was one of the truest artists I ever knew in the keenness and sensitiveness of her enjoyment, in her love of people and in her willingness to take pains. I did not realize all this as a child, but Annie fascinated me and I always had it in mind to write a story about her.
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> But from what point of view should I write it up? I might give her a lover and write from his standpoint. However, I thought my Antonia deserved something better than the _Saturday Evening Post_ sort of stuff in her book. Finally, I concluded that I would write from the point of a detached observer, because that was what I had always been.
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> Then I noticed that much of what I knew about Annie came from the talks I had with young men. She had a fascination for them, and they used to be with her whenever they could. They had to manage it on the sly, because she was only a hired girl. But they respected and admired her, and she meant a good deal to some of them. So I decided to make my observer a young man.
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> There was the material in that book for a lurid melodrama. But I decided that in writing it I would dwell very lightly on those things that a novelist would ordinarily emphasize, and make up my story of the little, every-day happenings and occurrences that form the greatest part of everyone's life and happiness.

Knowing Annie and her never-failing energy was an inspiration. The daughter of Bohemian immigrants, she had spent most of the time since she arrived in America (when she was 12) in breaking the reluctant prairie sod, struggling with the planting and harvesting and helping her widowed mother try to keep the family together. Desperation drove her to find employment in the Miner home as a "hired girl," and there, although she had never tried before, soon learned to cook and sew. When Mrs. Miner gave her permission to use the machine, she made all the clothes, shirts, jeans, overalls, and husking gloves for her own hardworking family. For herself she made everyday shoes with a cardboard insole, covered with oilcloth on the bottom and several thicknesses of suiting or denim on top. These she tied to her feet with black tape. Their flapping did not delay her in her breathless scurrying to do everything she could, and in her spare minutes she even found time (as the fictional "Antonia" did) to pick out hickory nut-meats for one of Hughie's special Sunday cakes.

The children took Annie with them to the Opera House entertainments. Carrie saw to it that although Annie's family collected her wages, for she was under 18, there was enough left for shoes. Annie would work all day and dance all night if she could. She soon learned to copy any style of dress and much to the annoyance of some of the other girls, made herself duplicates of those she liked. When later Annie went west to marry a brakeman on the Burlington, she had many beautiful clothes, but her happiness was short-lived, for after a few weeks her lover deserted her and Annie returned to Webster County and her mother's dugout.

Willa Cather's conception of her relationship to the region was not the conception which prevailed in the time, the conception of the writer as regionalist. She was not interested in asserting anything about the local color or the local characteristics of the region. She was interested in examining it, impressing upon it the significance of its existence in such a way as to get at, not only the eccentricities of the life of the region, but what in its life would be significant for people everywhere.

On a visit through Nebraska in 1921 she gave an interview in Lincoln in which she made the following remarks:

> People will tell you that I come West to get new ideas for a new novel or material for a new novel, as though the novel could be conceived by running around with a pencil jotting down phrases and suggestions. I don't even come West for local color. I could not say, however, that I don't come West for inspiration. I do get freshened up by coming out here. I like to get back to my hometown Red Cloud, to get out among the folk who like me for myself, who don't know and don't care a thing about my books. It makes me feel like a kid. The ideas for all my novels have come from things that happened around Red Cloud when I was a child. It happens that my mind was constructed for the particular purpose of absorbing impressions and retaining them. I always intended to write and there were certain persons I studied. I seldom had much idea of the plot or other characters but I used my eyes and ears.

III. Frost: his technique:

We have spoken of Cather's and Frost's visions of nature, of sin and loneliness, and of modern American capitalism and materialism. We have also discussed the decline of the sense of genre in American Literature and its relevance to both Cather and Frost, and the concomitant development of the kind of precision of vision which carries symbolic overtones--either consistent or occasional symbolic overtones.

It may be useful if we look at Frost's technique and attitude toward life in somewhat greater detail. The first thing which will strike, or ought to strike, the students as they read Frost is a certain kind of voice that he establishes in his poetry. It is partly the voice of a New England farmer; but this is only a mask which Frost adopted, for he was, after all, well-educated at Lawrence High School, at Dartmouth and at Harvard; and he spent some years in England with such super-sophisticated poets as Ezra Pound. Even though he preferred a rural residence and rural neighbors, Frost has always been very much a member of cosmopolitan university groups and very much in touch with the political and intellectual currents of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, his poetic voice is that of a New England Yankee farmer, and his manner in conversation in his later life was very much the same sort of voice. Students would profit from listening to records of Frost reading his poetry so as to get clear about the rhythms of his voice and the manner in which he drew upon New England lexicon and New England systems of accent and intonation. This is part of the genius of his poetry. Working with Frost should give the teacher an opportunity to deepen the students' understanding of regional dialect (cf. 9th Grade Dialects unit).

Frost also adopted a Yankee personality for the voice that spoke in his poetry, a narrator or the speaker who is cautious, detached, shrewd, diffident, terse, laconic and given to understatement. His vocabulary and habit are simple, his milieu rural, his tone a bit Horatian. His is a cold and controlled fire--like that of the Roman and Greek lyricists whom Cather admired or that of Edward Thomas, his teacher in England. Frost's ethos is that of the fool in Lear who makes fun of himself and gradually comes to make fun of others all the while smiling and moralizing. Frequently, the narrator in the poem finds himself acting as a revealer who knows a little more than his auditors but does not know the full meaning of the situation which he describes. And Frost leaves to his audience and to its perception the acquisition of a full understanding of what is going on. This dry and direct, seemingly objective, ironic, genial, self-effacting, and essentially simple voice Frost cultivates sufficiently so as to make it not simply the voice of a single poem but, as it were, the voice of the whole body of his work--the ethos according to which he wished his poems to be identified and which he used to address the world outside his poems.

This emphasis upon the local, the right dialect and intonation and ethos, is related to Frost's philosophy. Somewhere Frost speaks of how men know one another; he says that they know one another most by being most themselves and most apart from one another.

> Don't let me seem to say the exchange, the encounter,
> May not be the important thing at last.
> It well may be. We meet--I don't say when--
> But must bring to the meeting the maturest,
> The longest-saved-up, raciest, localist
> We have strength in us to bring.[1]

Frost's poetic voice is the voice of the maturest, longest-saved-up, raciest, and localist; his manner, that of distant deference and rather complete autonomy. This relates rather closely to Frost's social vision as we shall see.

There is a second aspect of Frost's technique to which we have referred before, and that is Frost's interest in the kind of building up of realistic surfaces which have figurative overtones. Earlier we stressed Frost's willingness to let the overtones remain no more than overtones--his tendency to create scenes in which we move from quiet description to descriptions which have a kind of resonance beyond themselves but an unspecified resonance. This is indeed the tone of Frost at his best.

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[1] Frost, "Build Soil" Collected Poems of Robert Frost, New York, Halcyon House, 1940, p. 246.

If one wishes to look at Frost's sense of the need to simplify and to stylize so as to allow the overtones to come through, it may be well to look at "The Witch of Coos," (pp. 33-40) and at Untermeyer's remarks on the poem. Both the story-poem itself and the remarks could very well have come from the pen of Willa Cather. In this story Frost simplifies details and leaves much unstated and allows us to create in part the resonance or meaning of the story. He does much the same kind of thing in the poem "The Oven Bird" (p. 196). The bird sings in late summer in the middle of the wood, and the narrator says that the bird's song simply suggests the extent to which summer does not match springtime in leaf-glory or flower-glory, in cleanness of smell or absence of dust. Then the poet turns about and says that "The bird would cease and be as other birds/ But that he knows in singing not to sing./ The question that he frames in all but words/ Is what to make of a diminished thing." The poem literally describes the oven bird, and Frost makes no direct statement as to the bird's having any kind of symbolic resonance except that its song has a kind of meaning which the poet assigns to it. But it gradually becomes, as we contemplate it, a figure for the poet in middle life who knows now how to handle tragedy and commonplace things as well as ordinary men know how to handle the ecstasies of spring and youth. Notice, however, that nothing is stated about the resonance of the bird; the resonances we have found are open-ended ones; nothing prevents us from finding further defensible metaphoric possibilities for the bird. We have to find the 'form' or formula which makes the bird meaningful; the poet's language only hints at directions.

On the other hand, in "The Silken Tent," the technique is virtually the technique of the writer of the emblem book or of such allegories as Hawthorne's. The poem compares a lady to a silken tent set in the field. Each of the parts of the tent are systematically compared to aspects of the woman. The central pole pointing heavenward has to do with her moral or religious security, her sureness of soul. The cords represent her familial and community relationships which are absolutely secure yet loose; they mutually support one another. The free movement of the tent and its responsiveness to suffering is an emblem for the freedom and lightness of this lady who is perfectly stable, at home with herself and her community and at the same time perfectly free and vivacious while tied by the bonds of a thousand responsibilities. What separates Frost from the banality of the emblem books is his diction, the use of the formally inverted word order, "She is as in a field a silken tent," and the freshness and consistency with which the comparison is sustained and the emblem made relevant.

Between these two extremes is the kind of poem represented by Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay." Here we have a springtime scene, the first budding of the willow trees, when the buds are light yellow on the trees and have not yet turned to leaf. However, the naturalistic descriptive scene at the beginning of the poem turns into a kind of emblem by the middle of the poem as the changing of the gold buds to leaves becomes something more than that. "Leaf subsides to leaf;" normally leaves do not subside by change. Subsiding suggests a kind of falling, and, indeed, the whole poem becomes a poem about falling and sinking: "So Eden sank to grief,/ So dawn goes down to day./ Nothing gold can stay." Eden and dawn are perfect worlds lost, and the suggestion of the poem is that all these--the disappearances of imaginative perfection, dawns becoming days, Edens becoming after-Edens—are inevitable natural processes and not isolated, non-repetitive happenings. Thus the poet established a whole stance toward the imagined, the perfection of art, or imagined paradises in the past or the future. Frost like Cather is contemptuous of phantasy visions which could never be realized; his Eden is springtime, actual rather than moral, and sure to go. The poem looks like a simple description of what nature is like in springtime; it looks as if the comparisons are thrown in just to clarify what nature is in that season. But the hard surface of the description of spring has a consistent resonance beyond itself which is more-or-less specified, but specifies now not through direct moralizing but through metaphors and connotations which all move in a single direction.

It is, I think, fair to say that Frost is generally at his best when he is at his most implicit and at his worst when he is at his most explicit. "The Silken Tent" is an unusual poem, better than most of Frost's when he is working in the emblematic mood or moralizing about a scene before him. When he is the complete essayist in poetry, he has little of the skill of a W. H. Auden or an Alexander Pope in giving discursive writing force and vigor as poetry. Anyone who looks at his pastoral for political conventions, entitled "Build Soil," can confirm this for himself.[1] Nevertheless this is one of the most important poems for getting at what Frost has to say about human obligations to one another and the building of societies. Because Frost seems at his best when he is most implicit readers of Frost have sometimes thought of him as a simple lyricist who lacks a vision of life; such a vision as we have been studying in, say, Thoreau or Emerson or Hawthorne or Willa Cather. But implicitness should not be mistaken for lack of content. A more detailed look at Frost's vision will suggest the breadth and depth of his content. His vision bears a great deal in common with Willa Cather's. There is, for instance, in Frost the same interest in the man who is capable of sustaining himself as independent from bureaucratic structures and procedural or security-building institutions. He, too, is interested in the subjective vision and in the manner in which it may be realized in the stuff of art and in the stuff of human society. And he, too, centers on a particular region, a region that he knows very well. For his task is to bring the cultural imagination into a working relationship with its materials. There is in Frost as well as in Cather a tremendous interest in what we have spoken of as achieved form, the working out of an organic relationship between the creator and his environment—both past and present; this relationship Frost expresses through metaphors other than those of the garden but it is expressed in any case. Frost goes beyond Cather, however, in his interest in the place of modern man in the natural world and his relationship to the discoveries of modern science. And he goes beyond Cather in his effort to deal with religious questions.[2] We suggested above that Cather deals primarily with the function of the church or of religious institutions in the civilizing of mankind.

B. Achieved Order:

It may be well to speak first of Frost's interest in the idea of achieved order. This idea of the human mind as either finding an order in nature or as (through its directing of man's artistic facilities and skills) creating an order is central in Frost's vision. Somewhere he writes:

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[1] Selected Poems by Robert Frost, Holt, Rinehart, Winston, Inc. p. 209.

[2] Thompson, Fire and Ice, p. 213.

> I thank the Lord for crudity, which is rawness, which is raw material, which is the part of life not yet worked up into form, or at least not worked all the way up. Meet with the fallacy of the foolish: having had a glimpse of finished art, they forever pine for a life that shall be nothing but finished art. Why not a world safe for art as well as democracy? A real artist delights in roughness for what he can do to it. He's the brute who can knock the corners off the marble block and drag the unbedded beauty out of bed. The statesman (politician) is no different except he works in a protean mass of material that hardly holds the shape he gives it long enough for him to point it out and get credit for it. His material is the rolling mob. The poet's material is words that for all we may say and feel against them are more manageable than men. Get a few words alone in a study and with plenty of time on your hands you can make them say anything you please.[1]

This conception of the essential civilizing function, the function of creating or discovering form, extends to Frost's religious statements. In another place he says:

> . . . We people are thrust forward out of the suggestions of form in the rolling clouds of nature. In us nature reaches its height of form and through us exceeds itself. When in doubt there is always form for us to go on with. Anyone who has achieved the least form to be sure of it, is lost to the larger excruciations. I think it must stroke faith the right way. The artist, the poet, might be expected to be the most aware of such assurance. But it is really everybody's sanity to feel it and live by it. Fortunately, too, no forms are more engrossing, gratifying, comforting, staying than those lesser ones we throw off, like vortex rings of smoke, all our individual enterprise and needing nobody's cooperation: a basket, a letter, a garden, a room, an idea, a picture, a poem. For these we haven't to get a team together before we can play.
>
> The background is hugeness and confusion shading away from where we stand into black and utter chaos; and against the background any small man-made figure of order and concentration. What pleasanter than that this should be so? Unless we are novelists or economists we don't worry about this confusion; we look out on it with an instrument or tackle it to reduce it. It is partly because we are afraid it might prove too much for us and our blend of democratic-republican-socialist-communist-anarchist party. But it is more because we like it, we were born to it, born used to it and have practical reasons for wanting it there. To me any little form I assert upon it is velvet, as the saying is, and to be considered for how much more it is than nothing. If I were a Platonist I should have to consider it, I suppose, for how much less it is than everything.[2]

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[1] Thompson, Fire and Ice, p. 213.

[2] Thompson, Fire and Ice, p. 188.

Man is for Frost the form-finding and the form-creating animal, and he is that creature in which nature exceeds itself by finding form. And, "finding form," for Frost, is finding the fit shape for what an object is to do, finding its proper relationships, relationships which are fit and esthetically pleasing.

This sense of form is described excellently in Frost's poem "The Axe Helve." The narrator in the poem is chopping wood in the forest when a French Canadian woodsman comes and tells him the helve of his axe is made with a machine and likely to snap off if he chops hard. Then the woodsman takes the narrator to his home; there he, both to the narrator's satisfaction and to his own, leaves unsaid what are his reasons for bringing him there, but his reason is to show that a Frenchman--a French Canadian in New England--has a right to be considered human because of his power of creating an artistic form for an axe handle. The Frenchman's wife rocks, not in her usual rhythmic back-and-forth, but in an agitated way to suggest that she feels threatened in the presence of the stranger who does not trust her husband's ability to create form. Finally, the Frenchman takes out his wood:

> Needlessly soon he had his axe-helves out,
> A quiverful to choose from, since he wished me
> To have the best he had, or had to spare--
> Not for me to ask which, when what he took
> Had beauties he had to point me out at length
> To insure their not being wasted on me.
> He liked to have it slender as a whipstock,
> Free from the least knot, equal to the strain
> Of bending like a sword across the knee.
> He showed me that the lines of a good helve
> Were native to the grain before the knife
> Expressed them, and its curves were no false curves
> Put on it from without. And there its strength lay
> For the hard work. He chafed its long white body
> From end to end with his rough hand shut round it.
> He tried it at the eye-hole in the axe-head
> "Hahn, hahn," he mused, "don't need much taking down."
> Baptiste knew how to make a short job long
> For love of it, and yet not waste time either.[1]

The piece of wood that he chooses has beauties which the narrator had not perceived until their form had been pointed out to him by the Frenchman. These beauties are closely related to the use of the axe-helve on the one side and to its natural form on the other side. The helve is slender, free from a knot, equal to the strain on the one side and on the other side its lines are native to the grain. Frost then extends this capacity of the Frenchman to perceive the form in the natural material, a form which no machine could perceive, to education: the Frenchman says that he keeps his children at home away from laid-on education, presumably so that they can have education in such form-discovering, such civilized endeavors as creating a proper axe handle. The Frenchman is Willa Cather's Rosicky on another frontier.

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[1] Robert Frost, Collected Poems, p. 230.

At the end of the poem he stands the axe on its foot and the axe suggests an evil force; it looks like the serpent in the garden, partly because the Frenchman has made a work of art which suggests in a sense the unnaturalness of axes. But it also carries with it a human look. The blade of the axe stands out and pulls its chin down and in a little. The Frenchman remarks how the axe cocks its head: it becomes a mirror of willful man's cutting down the natural world and at the same time of man's capacity, in cutting down, to create a world which mirrors him, a world of discovered forms and achieved order.

Because Frost believes so profoundly that this kind of form-finding act is the essential human act and because he believes that this must be done with limited and controllable material--axes and words and small plots of land--he has a little trust in large, powerful, human agglomerations and in the great organizations as did Cather. His "The Land Was Ours" is like no other patriotic poem I know; it is as if Frost were saying that we must be led by the wood for the axe handle before we discover, in the wood, the axe handle which will tell us what we are. When we find that we, of course, surrender ourselves to our own creation and, in a sense, are its tool and have to fight for it in many deeds of war.

C. Achieved Order and Society:

Perhaps the clearest picture of man as artificer, creating an achieved order which relates him to nature, is found in the poem "Mending Wall." The poem is written in a kind of relaxed blank verse and in the straight-forward, hard-surfaced statement which leaves everything to inference. (The contradiction which lies at the center of the poem is well described on pages 92 and 93 of the Untermeyer anthology.) At the beginning of the poem the poet speaks as if nature itself rebels against the imposition of property lines and so forth, and one seems to hear the voice of Ovid longing for the golden age in which all men held things in common. But the poem does not move in that direction. Instead, it contrasts what nature does in throwing down walls with the work of hunters--rapacious men who throw down walls to exploit nature or get a rabbit out of hiding and please the yelping dogs. The poet established three views toward property-holding: that of nature, which throws down walls; that of the rapacious man, who throws them down; and that of the property holder who builds them. Nature's throwing down of walls in not rapacious and the neighbor's building up of them again is not. Moreover, the building of walls is part of the expression of community-feeling between neighbor and neighbor:

> I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
> And on a day we meet to walk the line
> And set the wall between us once again.
> And keep the wall between us as we go.

The narrator then indulges in some banter about the meaninglessness of the wall since the one farmer has all pine trees and the other all apple orchards; the neighbor simply replies, "Good fences make good neighbours." But the narrator returns to the point, the needlessness of the wall where there are no cows and there is nothing to be walled in and walled out.

Suddenly the poem turns round. The narrator sees a neighbor bringing a stone in each hand "like an old-stone savage armed." The narrator suddenly becomes one cave man and his neighbor another, both of them moving in darkness--not the darkness of woods and the shade of trees but the darkness of primordial human rapacity, the darkness of the hunters. And then as suddenly the light changes again: now this darkness is ordered, organized, restrained by conventions of human society--the walls that prevent men from exploiting one another. "Good fences make good neighbours;" they hold back the formlessness of nature that spills over the walls on the one side and the rapacity of the hunters that would destroy the walls on the other. The picture is a rural picture, in which men exist in a certain relationship to nature and in a certain relationship to one another; they are in touch with the fields and the seasons without heing either utterly oblivious to them or utterly slavish before them. They are also in touch with primordial savagery and know what walls are for. Frost's respect for the discovered forms ("walls") which allow us to restrain human rapacity does not, however, imply that he is any more attracted to a property-owning civilization as it exists in the industrial twentieth century than is Willa Cather.

"A Brook in the City" says what Frost has to say about industrial civilization. If the brook in this poem means what it means in "West-running Brook"--that is, the life force which flows from God to the lowest creature--then Frost is saying here that city life seals off and renders wholly unnatural the divine life force in men and beasts. And in its being rendered unnatural, men too are deformed

> But I wonder
> If from its being kept forever under
> The thoughtsmay not have risen that so keep
> This new-built city from both work and sleep.

Human rapacity is disposed of in a wall no longer needed, which allows a man to have some wood in which to find the form, to have his feet down in the clay. More than a wall--pavements and sewers--are too much.

"A Lone Striker" says much the same thing in a different way. The lone striker sees man's relationship to the machine: he watches the machine giving form to the cotton and sees that the human being is no longer a form-finder, an order-achiever; he only occasionally ties things together. Frost rather delicately understates his contempt for such a world: "Man's ingenuity was good." But he feels another kind of obligation to be among the tops of trees, breathing their breath in and they, breathing his.

The final image of the poem is set in terms not simply of religious discovery but of obligation to work; the point is that the narrator seeks to discover a form in nature which is the consequence of intense and personal interaction. It is as if Frost were saying you people ought to understand that this act of discovering form in nature, of inter-acting with it, this act of worship, if you will, is at least as important as work:

> The factory was very fine;
> He wished it all the modern speed.
> Yet, after all, 'twas not divine,
> That is to say, 'twas not a church.

He does not reject society; he will help it in its need but he has another need to handle.

And much the same idea comes out in "The Road Not Taken," where the poet asserts his need to be an individual, to inter-act with certain primeval forces, and to discover his own kinds of forms in them. This is not Emersonian self-reliance for it does not depend on discovering the divine within one; it means making use of the best possible use of one's faculties, going one's own way, developing one's own skills, and discovering inch by inch and little by little how one can fit into the world and how one can fit the world to oneself.

Frost has other things to say about modern materialism, about what it does to the imagination as opposed to what it does to one's relationship to the natural, for instance the poem "Departmental." This poem, written in mocking couplets like Marlowe's Hero and Leander, depicts through an animal fable the way in which the complexity and specialization of modern civilization destroys both man's imagination and his command of feelings, or put in another way, the form imposed on man by modern civilization is not in accord with the grain in man's nature. And "The Vindictives" is a playful parable about the materialism of the Conquistadors who are looking to impose their kind of form. When the Indians' first king was killed after they had piled a room full of gold, they hid and put back into the earth all the gold that they had. Then they told the Conquistadors there was more and more gold to be found at the bottoms of lakes and caves and in wild moutains and across frontiers; and as a result the Conquistadors were driven mad by the vision of what they could not have. Frost ends the poem with a kind of Aesopean moral comment:

'The best way to hate is the worst.
'Tis to find what the hated need,
Never mind of what actual worth,
And wipe that out of the earth.
Let them die of unsatisfied greed,
Of unsatisfied love of display,
Of unsatisfied love of the high,
Unvulgar, unsoiled, and ideal.
Let their trappings be taken away.
Let them suffer starvation and die
Of being brought down to the real."[1]

The indictment of materialism which Frost makes is not that it involves too much concern with things as they are but that it is too little concerned with them, that it forever creates for itself a worthless world beyond the present world and drives men mad in searching for it. Frost is in love with things as they are when the imagination acts on them: when it imagines things which can actually be brought into the real world to satisfy man; when it deals with things as they are. This extends to his religious vision.

C. Frost: His Religious Views

The religious side of this interest of Frost's can be seen in the poem "A Prayer in Spring."

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[1] Untermeyer, p. 53.

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;
And make us happy in the happy bees,
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird
That suddenly above the bees is heard,
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,
The which it is reserved for God above
To sanctify to what far ends He will,
But which it only needs that we fulfill.

Frost uses the Biblical allusion to the harvest--the last judgment, or final things or heaven, anything outside of time--and suggests that to be concerned with these kinds of things is to be concerned with what is ultimately maddening in much the same way that the materialist's being concerned with cities of gold is maddening or misleading. Man's proper response to the created world for Frost, is to have pleasure in the flower of today, to be a discoverer of form in the immediately present and not in the long past or distant future. Thus, his Eden poems are not about Eden at the beginning of time; rather they are about Edens of present snow ("Winter Eden," p. 176), present love between man and nature, and between man and beast. This Eden endures for an hour.

The two themes of the corruption of the imagination by the materialist's enterprise and the confusion of the imagination by its effort to project ideal states at the beginning or the end of time are brought together in Frost's "After Apple-Picking." The poem is a good realistic account of apple-picking in New England, but there are certain parts of the poem that cannot be accommodated to a realistic reading. As one critic has put it: "The word essence comes strangely into the poem. Sometimes in poetry the unusual word may be a signal, a sign post." Here the word "essence" most readily brings a notion of some sort of perfume, some sort of distillate; but it also suggests the philosophic meaning of something permanent and eternal, some necessary element or substance. The poet smells the essence of winter sleep--the scent of apples--and its vision comes to him as he looks through a pane of ice glass; suddenly the two--the smell of apples and the distorted vision through the piece of glass--produce real sleep in the narrator in which he dreams of tremendous apples. The narrator picks apple after apple after apple, his instep arch aches, he hears the rumbling of epic quantities of apples coming in, and he himself is overtired of the harvest which he had been looking forward to all the time. In the harvest, some of the apples are cherished and hand-lifted down and some are bruised and sent to the cider-apple heap. We have a sense of a harvest comparable to the harvest in "A Prayer in Spring."

And in this context, if we look back at the poem, there seem to be two worlds --one a world in which the poet labors and the other in which he sleeps and dreams of labor; the world in which he sleeps and dreams of labor becomes a comment on the world in which he labors.

In the world of labor, he has a ladder sticking through a tree toward heaven as if he were climbing, climbing perhaps toward the city of God. As he dreams of labor, he dreams of a harvest which will come at the end of his summer. The apples will be separated into the good and the bad. But the poet in the dream seems to reject the apple-picking job, the striving for either wealth in this world or wealth in the next, and to say about the same kind of thing which was said in "A Prayer in Spring." But he doesn't. What he recognizes in this poem is that the dream of future wealth in this world, the harvest, or the dream of what will come at the harvest time in religious terms is a very human kind of dream. It is not such a dream as a wood-chuck could dream. The ladder pointing toward heaven still points toward man's ultimate reward, toward Ithaca, toward some repository of perfection---an ideal value. But then across the poem comes the sense that in age, when winter sleep comes, this kind of pushing for a final reward --however human--finally becomes an activity which wise human beings transcend as the sleep of age and wisdom and immersion in the present sense and sights come over them.

Frost's interest in the corruption of the imagination through an over-concern with the ideal and his concern with the death of the imagination through a complete immersion in the present and its unformed chaos coms through in a particularly elegant and muted way in "Birches." One of the most interesting contrasts of the poem is its juxtaposing of the boy and the storm which shapes the birches exactly as the boy would; but whereas the storm's shaping of the birches means nothing and suggests to us only the brute meaninglessness of the natural process, the boy's shaping of the birch becomes a figure for the kind of tree climbing which goes with apple picking--with constructing imaginative future ideal worlds. At the same time, his riding the tree trunk down to the ground suggests an endeavor to bring those worlds to the earth--and a return to the real.

"The Bear" considers the same theme--now in relationship to scientific and philosophic concerns; men look through the microscope suggesting certain kinds of scientific investigation and an overconcern with minutiae and through the telescope suggesting another kind of concern for what comes at the end of apple picking's "ladder." Like a caged bear, man never feels the world immediately around: *the significance of choke cherries, walls, dancing on wire fences.* Thus, as a scientist man looks only at the too distant or the too near; similarly in the area of metaphysics, he is either too much the Platonist or too much the materialist. Sedentary or walking, he as metaphysician is concerned with the beyond nature or with nature in the manner of the scientist; he is essentially trapped by a failure to *see* with *his own* eyes. Frost is an Aristotelian who wished to see neither the general nor the special exclusively but the general in the special.

Frost's "The Star-Splitter" is a man with a telescope who takes his stargazing seriously. The fellow feels that he is mocked by the heavens and asks if the stars do not owe man some respect. To get at man's relationship to infinity, he burns down his house in order to get the necessary money for a telescope. What the narrator discovers is that the telescope allows for making some fine talk--"[We] said some of the best things we ever said"--but that it does not allow one to know any more about his relationship to ultimate reality than before. The central symbol of the poem is probably the smokey lantern chimney which the stargazer carries and which is contrasted with the telescope. Frost suggests that to understand ultimate reality one has to understand the immediate. This would not involve buying a telescope--however sympathetic and human, even heroic, an effort--but cleaning a lantern chimney so as to allow one to see a fire or a railroad track with clear eyes. The irony of the poem is that man who wishes to "see" is incapable of a cleaned lantern chimney, even as the man in "The Bear" is incapable of seeing choke cherries and rocking boulders "on the wall."

Frost does seem in his own poetry of the occult to do a bit of star-splitting. A concern for the imagination's capacity to lay hold on the immediate and see what is in it informs his dramatic monologues--monologues which are a series of Frostean investigations of the idea of achieved order in human relationships and of the failure to achieve it. "The Fear" has been analyzed as follows by Lawrence Thompson:

> The situation in "The Fear" is almost a continuation of "The Housekeeper," for the woman who is afraid has left one man and has been living with another for some time on a lonely farm. The abrupt beginning of this dramatic narrative brings the attention to focus so sharply on the crucial scene that the deepest cause of the fear is not immediately apparent: the ever-present apprehension that the other man will find the woman. When the moment seems to have come, the fearing woman is self-dependent and bold. Returning in the dark, one night, to the empty farm where she is living with her lover, the woman sees in the gleam of the wagon-light a face beside the road. She will know the worst and advances alone to challenge the unknown visitor. He turns out to be a passing stranger, taking an evening stroll with his son. Surprised at her challenge, he frankly reveals himself in the light of her uplifted lantern. After her apologies, the relieved woman almost faints, while the lantern drops from her hand to the ground.[1]

The woman is perfectly aware that she has to create some order out of the darkness and chaos which is on the fringe of her experience: she recognizes that the fears which train her are as much psychological as they are real; she says that she has to put things the right way; she says that if the stranger gets away, he'll be everywhere--chaos and fear will be all around; and, as she goes forward, she cries to all the dark, overlooks the light, and carries the lantern hot against her skirts so that she becomes a kind of center of the light. When the stranger comes into the light and becomes simply a father out for a walk with his child, we have a sense of an achieved order similar to that which Frost describes when he describes what the sculptor does with wood. "A Hundred Collars," on the other hand, takes exactly the same kind of experience and displays a failure to get at what is going on, to comprehend, to make sense, to see the form or the grain in the wood which could make the helve.

Such brilliant dramatic poems as "Home Burial" to some extent deal with the same theme. This poem describes the conflict between husband and wife over their different ways of representing and carrying the sorrow which grows out of the death of their first child. The poem is concerned with styles or forms of expressing grief. The mother bears her heart in her hands, in a kind of hysterical, tragic, sentimental posture. She stands at the window and grieves and assumes that she alone is capable of grief, that her husband cannot see what the grief is and is incapable of grief. Her husband, on the other hand, covers his grief with the action of a matter-of-fact digging of a grave and a matter-of-fact natural metaphor, "Three foggy mornings and one rainy day/ Will rot the best birch fence a man can build."

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[1] Thompson, Fire and Ice, p. 110.

The husband understands that the formula which his wife has adopted for grief does not express her grief but her own loneliness. He also understands that the form which he has adopted for grief is the form which genuine and profound expressions of grief take. Understanding the wife's statement as a statement of her own loneliness and need for love, he says in essence at the end of the poem that he will force himself into her world--exactly what she wants, exactly the form of response that her statement demands. Whereas the woman is capable of finding nothing but chaos and creating nothing but chaos, the man is capable of finding and creating a kind of artistic order in the death of a child and in the hysteria of a woman.

The search for the right form for labor and for play is the theme of "Two Tramps in Mud Time." The narrator of the poem is set against the world of mud and water, a kind of formless chaotic world, chopping wood. Two tramps, really not tramps, but to his mind tramps, come by, mocking his chopping and suggesting their capacity to do a better job of it, by saying, "Hit them hard!" Whereas the narrator has been doing the wood chopping for the pleasure of releasing hours of frustration and necessary self-control, the wandering workmen who come by want the chopping job for pay. Chopping is, of course, the job for giving a usable form to the pieces of wood. The poet suggests through the next three stanzas, which turn away from the tramps and from the wood chopping, that his purpose in chopping the wood is more than the release of frustration. The next stanzas turn on a series of contrasts between objects; the poet places himself on the borderline between them. "The sun was warm but the wind was chill:" the poet is caught between the warmth of the sun and the chill of the wind, between cloud and sunlight. A bluebird appears before the poet and sings--a kind of mirror-image of the poet. And the song does not encourage the flowers to bloom and does not suggest sorrow. The water runs (not the mud now). The water runs in every wheel rut, suggesting life and springtime; and yet it is on the verge of freezing and showing its crystal teeth.

The sequence of stanzas suggests that the poet is caught between a world of joy and a world of sorrow, a world of warmth and a world of cold, a savage and a civilized world. And then we begin to see in the fourth stanza that the narrator is not only a woodchopper but, insofar as the bird is a reflection of the narrator, he is a form-giver, a songster, perhaps like a poet.

The tramps who come by judge the style of the man's work purely in terms of its utilitarian purposes. They judge forms from that angle. The speaker judges his, initially, from the perspective exclusively of play; but as the poem moves toward its close we have a sense that he is moved in the direction of the tramps and begins to see that what we have earlier called achieving order is done neither for work or for play but is done both for the joy of creating form and for the usefulness of the created form. This is, of course, what Frost sees poetry and man as doing. Seen from this perspective, the last stanza becomes something more than a banal preachment.

The death of an old maker of forms is studied in "The Death of the Hired Man." The hired man has left claiming he could make more money at another place and now he's come back broken and ready to die, claiming that he wishes to make order in three places where he left chaos: in the meadow, which needs ditching; in the upper pasture, which needs clearing; and in young Wilson's mind, which needs ordering so that he understands how to make a hay load and how to find water. The hired man is one who possesses a kind of intuitive wisdom which can discover the forms in nature. His brother is a successful banker, the product of another kind of world, who makes him feel ashamed when he comes near and perhaps of whom he feels ashamed. The old hired man is broken because he can't practice the crafts which he knows and earn a decent living with them and, yet, can't go without a sufficient, decent living, to preserve his dignity, buy tobacco, and avoid begging. The woman in the poem is the mirror image, as it were, of the hired man in the same way as the husband in the poem is the mirror image of Silas's brother, the banker.

The progress of the poem takes the form of a series of metaphors or images, pictures, forms through which the wife informs the husband. Only when she can achieve the right formula can he attain sufficient insight and compassion to accept the hired man and perhaps love him.

In her images he's first a worn-out and a miserable sight, a jumbled fellow, jumbled in mind. Her picture of him gradually moves us to an understanding of his capacity to create a kind of order in his own world; then he is a man who has come home to die and there is a celebrated exchange about the meaning of the word "home." He's a familiar dog who has come home, having been worn out on the trail. Finally, he is a man who won't be shamed. The last picture of him is a picture of him as a planner:

"Go, look, see for yourself
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

The hired man is a planner and form-maker who once realized his plans and who is still trying to apple-pick after apple-picking time is over. The husband is without capacity for creating comeliness and the woman is caught between. She has achieved a kind of beautiful synthesis which allows her both to know what the world is and how it can be shaped to be better.

The study of the poem is a study of the process of doing just this. After we have read this poem, we know what in human society stands between fire and ice for Frost. What holds society from destruction is not very distant from what allows a man to make a good axe helve or a hired man to die with dignity.

We have suggested that Frost is something of a star-splitter himself. This is not to suggest that his lantern is sooty. He was, of course, reared in a household which was fairly religious, his mother having been a kind of Swedenborgian mystic. He grew up in a New England which still admitted a profound sense of indebtedness to the Puritan and Congregational tradition. At the same time he encountered a world in which the primary matters of revelation were being called into question and where religion, whether Unitarian or Christian, had to endeavor to assimilate such doctrines as evolution--the discovery of the survival of the fit--as one of the primary laws of biological nature. He early encountered theories which suggested that there need not be a first cause or a creator God at the beginning of history. (This idea is, of course, at least as old as Hume and in some forms as old as the Greeks.) Thus, it is not surprising that Frost considers

—and does—some star-splitting of his own in his poems. However, it is important to recognize that his roles as a star-splitter and as a commentator upon the forms which man creates are not unrelated to one another.

Since something of the aura of the "good-neighbor" poet has grown up around Frost, it may be well to remind the reader that much of Frost's star-splitting poetry questions and probes popular or received understandings of the relationship between man and nature and the God behind nature. For instance, the argument from "Design" is often used to support the existence of God. (This argument is studied at length in the 10th grade "Man and Nature" unit.) Frost, from the perspective of post-evolutionary understandings of biology, writes the poem "Design" in which the narrator looks upon a fat, white spider which has killed a moth and asks the question:

> What brought the kindred spider to that height,
> Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
> What but design of darkness to appall?—
> If design govern in a thing so small.

The poem suggests that if we select scenes such as the encounter of a spider and a moth as the scenes upon which we project the design argument, our God must be pale white, diseased, and destructive in his order. The pale emblem suggests that design may not operate in nature. The choice of the spider may not be accidental. It may be remembered that Hume, in arguing against the argument from design, suggests that if we look upon the design of the world and conjecture what kind of creature created and is ordering it, we might perhaps think of an enormous black spider; the same idea appears in one of Ingmar Bergman's films.

If Frost rejects the argument from design he also expresses very little faith in the kind of intuitional encounter with the divine in nature to which Coleridge and Wordsworth, Emerson and Thoreau looked—an encounter which they frequently symbolized through the metaphor of wind. If a too calculating concern for apple-picking is a very human and a very limited activity, what man can know through the intuition of what lies beyond the present is also pretty limited:

> Wind goes from farm to farm in wave on wave,
> But carries no cry of what is hoped to be.
> There may be little or much beyond the grave,
> But the strong are saying nothing until they see.[1]

Frost does not deny the existence of the after-life. He frequently speaks of it. He simply specifies its incomprehensible character; it may be little or much. This leaves open the door to its being everything that men have said it may be. It leaves the door open to its being nothing.

Frost's skepticism extends to institutional vehicles of conventional religion. This comes out in the poem "The Peaceful Shepherd." His conception of revelation in religion or in human affairs comes out in the poem "Revelation," the last stanza of which requires very close reading: "So all who hide too well away/ Must speak and tell us where they are." Pascal in his Pensees, which is studied in the 10th grade "Man and Nature" unit, speaks of the Christian God as a hidden

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[1] Collected Poems, P. 391.

God who is known only through the revelation of the historical incarnation; this is one of Pascal's arguments for Christianity--that God is the unknownable except in terms of the incarnation. Frost seems to be playing with this idea and half rejecting it, "So with all, from babes that play/ At hide-and-seek to God afar,/ So all who hide too well away/ Must speak and tell us where they are." This would suggest that Frost's God--the notion of God which he can entertain--must speak not only once in the incarnation but speaks again and again with a direct voice to man. Revelation is not revelation unless it is received again in our time by the religious soul.

Frost plays again with Pascal's apology for Christianity in his poem "Desert Places," which again takes up the image of snow and whiteness as a picture of the possible malice in the universe, the design of darkness.

> Snow falling and night falling fast oh fast
> In a field I looked into going past,
> And the ground almost covered smooth in snow,
> But a few weeds and stubble showing last.
>
> The woods around it have it--it is theirs.
> All animals are smothered in their lairs,
> I am too absent-spirited to count;
> The loneliness includes me unawares.
>
> And lonely as it is that loneliness
> Will be more lonely ere it will be less--
> A blanker whiteness of benighted snow
> With no expression, nothing to express.
>
> They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
> Between stars--on stars where no human race is.
> I have it in me so much nearer home
> To scare myself with my own desert places.[1]

The scene is almost like that in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." But as the evidence of blank design piles up, the animals feel smothered in their lairs, and the poet recognizes that he is too absent-spirited, too lacking in spirit, to count in the design of the universe. And he feels himself completely lonely because there perhaps is no benevolence which looks after him. Everywhere he looks he sees "A blanker whiteness of benighted snow/ With no expression, nothing to express."

Then the poem turns with its full savagery, "They cannot scare me with their empty spaces/ Between stars--on stars where no human race is." Pascal had said that the silence of the infinite space terrified him; medieval people thought that the infinite spaces were filled with the music of the spheres, which was a reflection of the angels singing, and so their world was humanized and given a kind of benevolent aspect through the projection of spiritual beings upon it. With Copernicus' and Galileo's discoveries, those projections were undermined; and Pascal honestly admitted that the silence of the infinite spaces terrified him. Frost suggests that there is another kind of terror that comes to him which is a modern kind of terror.

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[1] Collected Poems, p. 386.

Whereas Thoreau and Emerson could look inward and see what they thought to be the divine,[1] Frost looks inward and sees only a kind of savage: "I have it in me so much nearer home/ To scare myself with my own desert places." Frost's limitation of the argument from design derives from skepticism concerning its applicability or validity, at least when extended to details, and his skeptical attitude toward the divinity of inner intuition derives from his sense that not only the infinite spaces but his own inwardness terrify him. His curious definition and limitation of revelation do not, however, reduce the universe to such a blankness or whiteness as, say, Melville is sometimes said to have seen.

In a poem called "Sitting By a Bush in Broad Sunlight," Frost suggests that there must have been a first-Mover. The poem parallels natural studies and metaphysical studies, a parallelism which also occurs in "The Bear." Playing on the sun as the physical sun and as a symbol for God, the poet, sitting beside the window, watches the sun passing between but not penetrating his fingers, and reflects on a time when the sun penetrated the earth and made it move with living warmth--such a time as is rendered in Ovid's account of the creation at the beginning of the Metamorphoses; he thinks of the time when God declared "I am that I am" and then became "a hidden God," in Pascal's phrase. These two acts--the act of initial creation by the physical sun or by the sun which is God and the act of revelation and then veiling--become arguments for a First-Mover; the uniqueness of the acts does not prompt Frost to suggest that they ought to be suspected as a scientist is inclined to suspect unique events as non-existent. The poet, rather, says that their uniqueness requires that we take them as we take breath. The poem is perhaps less conventional than it seems, for the title, in a sense, suggests its symbolism. The poet is "Sitting by a bush in broad sunlight" and the bush looks like a burning bush, a bush penetrated by the sun and made alive by it, a bush much like that which burned before Moses. In this seeing the present symbol of past religious truth, the poet is brought to temporary insight, an insight into what the first creation may have been like or what the appearance to Moses could have been.

More often Frost's religious speculations are closely tied up with his understanding of the doctrine of evolution. Perhaps his most explicit and philosophic treatment of this doctrine occurs in the poem "West-running Brook." The poem seems to require background, not the background of a Darwinian conception of the survival of the fit as a simple mechanical operation such as the poem "Design" in part requires, but rather the background of a conception of a First-Mover or a life-force such as that proposed by Henri Bergson or by the recent French Catholic philosopher Pierre Teilhard du Chardin--the belief that there is a kind of spirit or organizing agency in the universe which acts upon the chaotic and moves it toward shapeliness, form, order.

Neither Teilhard nor Bergson nor any of the other emergent evolutionists argue in favor of a belief in a life-force exclusively on the basis of scientific evidence (though Bergson presents some evidences of the concomitant appearance of a whole series of related faculties in, say, animals which he thinks couldn't have occurred by chance). Nevertheless, they believe that this force is properly understood by looking at the purposefulness of the evolutionary process, its making sudden leaps from the lower to the higher without waiting for random elimination of false starts; the discovery of the existence of the life-force depends on a sense of a direction of things which goes beyond the possibilities of analytic science.

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[1] However, in Walden there is an episode in which Thoreau reveals an impulse to eat a woodchuck alive.

The force constantly creates that which did not exist before and which was not inevitably implicit in the previous. All these things are a river. These thinkers thereby deny the legitimacy of the discoveries of the mind insofar as it imagines life as a series of fixed, abstract, permanent objects, and sets them in apparent isolation or in permanently fixed relationship with one another. Science does this. But to them the life of the mind--the consciousness--like reality is not a series of states but is like a river. Indeed, if one wanted to characterize Bergson's common metaphor it might be the metaphor of flow or of rivers. The life-force as it expresses itself in the universe is like a river, constantly ordering and organizing and pulling things into its movement determined only by its own free, spontaneous play across the centuries. The human consciousness as an expression of the life-force is also like a river within a river of experience flowing over it and changing constantly. The world of science, on the other hand, is an effort to set down fixed forms. Sometimes Bergson represents the flow of the life-force or the movement of the life-force as a kind of river flowing upward in opposition to the downward-flowing river of matter, a wave or a force making its way up against the lumpy pressures of the disorganizing and chaotic and the purely material.

There is, of course, in Aristotle a somewhat similar sense of God as the First-Mover from whom radiate principles of form, which impose themselves upon matter in varying degrees of perfection and completeness; and at the other end of the scale of being is pure matter which is molded by form. Everything is both form and matter, with the exception of God, who is pure form; form is what develops and gives shape to a thing, and matter is what gives existence to it. Out of the interaction of form and matter, the world which we see, in which we move, live, and have our being arises. Any natural process comes from an energy or potential, which ultimately goes back to the first cause, the beginning of the beginning, God Himself.

Aristotle conceives of the world as moved by a kind of cosmic love sickness, a yearning for beginnings:--all things strive to move from potential to actual--from previous potential to new potential to new actual toward stasis or a kind of unmotion, that place at which a thing, inanimate or animate, comes as close to pure form (or God) as its potentiality allows. Life is motion, motion begun and ending in the First-Mover.

We could go through a great many philosophers between Aristotle and Bergson in which ideas of emergentism appear, but those we have discussed are sufficient to give one background so that one can understand the kind of thing which Frost is doing. If you will return now to the quotation in which Frost states that man is a form-created organism, and that the universe is also discovering form in itself and heightening the form implicit within itself, and that its tendency toward search for form reaches its height in mankind, one has a considerable background for understanding "West-running Brook." It is Frost's hardest poem.

The poem is actually a kind of conversation between a person who is too much a materialist and a person who is too much a Platonist--the apple-picker looking for something outside of time and the river immediately before him. The conversation begins in a relaxed way; the woman asks which way is north and the husband tells her the brook along which they are walking runs west. The poem then opens out to a discussion of contraries.

The woman suggests that there is something curious about this brook's turning against the natural process and going west instead of east, as all the other streams go. She suggests there must be something which the brook can count on to insure it will somehow reach the ocean. The contrariness of the brook is exposed through a series of thesis-antithesis-synthesis images: the force which moves the wrong way and the force which moves the right way, which together create the force which brings things ultimately to the right end; the brook, the other brooks, and the sea; the husband, the wife, and their love; the general motion of the stream and the contrary wave, and the cycle; matter running down to a death and life pushing up towards complete form and the emergence of the universe in the process --all of these contraries and syntheses might be pointed out.

But to talk about the poem is to view it as a jig-saw-puzzle; it is much more than that. It is a dramatic poem, and one must therefore attend to the two voices which are talking. The wife represents the intuitive, the imaginative, and simultaneously the conventionally religious person, the person who sees eternity in a grain of sand; she suggests that the brook must be able to trust itself to something outside, since it can go the wrong way, and she feels that she can do the same with her husband, and her husband with her. Moreover she represents limitations of the intuition here, for she is unable to explain why these tensions can be trusted to produce, out of their interaction, a movement toward the right end. The husband simply throws off a lighthearted, "Well we can trust one another because we are dumb and foolish"--"young and new." But the woman intimates that this is not to be taken as a lighthearted conversation and tries to suggest that the same process must be operating in them which operates in the brook, that the two should be married to the brook as they are married to each other, as if the same tensions were running through all three. Then she moves to the metaphor of the bridge: "Let's build a bridge" across the brook; the bridge will be the arm which they throw over the brook in the same way that they throw an arm over one another. Finally she says that the brook is waving to them, as if the brook had a personality.

She first raises the question of to what the brook can trust itself to wander to reach the right end. Her answer is: "Let's become part of the natural process." This is the first image; and "Let's control the natural process," is the second image; and the third image is "Let's see the personality of the divine expressing itself through the process; this natural process is responding to us and we to it."

None of these metaphors are accepted by the materialist husband. He gives a simple natural explanation of what she sees as the river waving to them; he says it is simply that the stream catches on a sunken rock and is being thrown back on itself as it sweeps over the rock, forming a wave which gives out with spray like feathers; that this relationship between the river and the rock has been a relationship which has existed from the beginning of time. The husband is a scientist who wants to fix things in a permanent and a fixed relationship and to demythologize and depersonalize them. For him, the brook has been here ever since brooks were made. It doesn't wave to people.

The wife denies the blank materialist interpretation and says, "Well, to your kind of imagination that may be the case, but you don't have the intuition to see that what the wave did was an annunciation; God incarnated himself in the river and spoke to me." The husband replies in a mocking sceptic's voice saying, "Well if you women are going to talk that way, there is no further use in talking because you have gone off to a land where only women dwell and where you are out of touch with reality." She has, he says, gone to the land that conquistadors search for, that the apple pickers seek, that the bears look at through the ends of the telescope and microscope or through the Platonic lens. She is a myth-maker in the worst sense. And it looks as if the husband is going to be satisfied with his simple materialistic explanation.

But the wife says, "You know you aren't satisfied; that isn't enough." It is out of that tension between the husband and the wife that the final statement of the poem comes. It is an effort to synthesize the perspective of the man who says that everything is simple physical law and governed by an inevitable impersonal law over which the divine has no power and that of the woman who says that everything is an expression of personality and speaks to our intuitions of what we are. The husband, returning with a more imaginative version of what he has said before, says that the brook becomes part of a continuing physical process; that this physical process is a meaningful, purposeful, physical process which allows for a vision of the world something like the woman's. The brook becomes a symbol for matter's flowing away from any achieved comeliness, from the source of life or from God conceived of as the Aristotelian First Cause. The poet remembers that, in the evolutionary process, man and all other 'shapely' things came from the primordial protoplasm of the sea; now he sees the brook as moving backward toward chaos.

> It is from that in water we were from
> Long, long before we were from any creature.
> Here we, in our impatience of the steps,
> Get back to the beginning of beginnings,
> The stream of everything that runs away.
> Some say existence like a Pirouot
> And Pirouette, forever in one place
> Stands still and dances, but it runs away,
> It seriously, sadly, runs away
> To fill the abyss' void with emptiness.
> It flows beside us in this water brook,
> But it flows over us. It flows between us
> To separate us for a panic moment.
> It flows between us, over us, and with us.
> And it is time, strength, tone, light, life and love-
> And even substance lapsing unsubstantial;
> The universal cataract of death
> That spends to nothingness--and unresisted,
> Save by some strange resistance in itself,
> Not just a swerving, but a throwing back,
> As if regret were in it and were sacred.

The force that poet sees, the movement away toward nothingness and death, reflects a part of love relationship as it depends on moments of malice and on sadistic destructive impulses in human beings.

There is a second force though which is a throwing back, an effort to get back to the source, symbolized by the wave which, although it is not personal, acts as if it were personal. It is not like a wave waving to the woman; it is not the divine in nature; but it acts as if it were, as if regret were in it and were sacred.

This force is the force that transforms things back to what they have degenerated from, so that the death of creatures becomes a source of a higher form of life. The brook feeds the life of lovers, the sun destroys itself in snatching up the vapors which feed the sources of the brook. The something or other behind nature is a force which spends itself to send up the sun. Everywhere those things which are spending themselves are spending up something beyond themselves. This is the life force, and it is man who has the most capacity to spend himself to send up something higher: "It is this backward motion towards the source against the stream that most we see ourselves in, the tribute of the current of the source. It is from this in nature we are from which is most us."

This, of course, returns us to the love affair; it is the spending to throw up something higher. They are spending themselves in opposition to one another to throw up the something higher that biological and human love is. In the tension of the destructive and upward-running in love they can place reliance. At the end of the poem, the tension is resolved; the being loved assents to the lover's picture of how the world is put together; the lover says that that picture grew out of what the beloved said about the brook. The materialist and the Platonist come together in the final statement: "Today will be the day of what we both said." The final three sentences of the poem re-enact, in dramatic terms, the whole cosmic movement of personality and natural process which the poem has described.

Frost, however, is not to be seen as an Emersonian; nor is he a mechanist or a plain Darwinian.

He looks to a kind of purposefulness in the natural process and movement towards form. He sees man as the highest expression of the movement toward form; of achieved order in nature, as a central human individual and social act.

Thus such poems as "Mowing," or "Mending Wall," centered on private acts, should be set in the framework of Frost's views of how the universe as a whole is put together, as pictures of man's collaborating with the form-making, form-fulfilling, form-creating process. Perhaps Frost's finest poem in defiance of that which moves toward formlessness, that which in the battle of the survival of the fit would destroy the comely, is "Sand Dunes." Again the sea is a figure for chaos, the land which arises out of it is a kind of extension of chaos. The last lines are a shout that human kind will never succumb to such.

Sea waves are green and wet
But up from where they die,
Rise others vaster yet,
And those are brown and dry.

They are the sea made land
To come at the fisher town,
And bury in solid sand
The men she could not drown.

She may know cove and cape,
But she does not know mankind
If by any change of shape,
She hopes to cut off mind.

Men left her a ship to sink:
They can leave her a hut as well;
And be but more free to think
For the one more cast off shell.

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A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

THE RHETORIC OF THE SHORT UNITS OF COMPOSITION:
THE RHETORIC OF THE PARAGRAPH

Grade 11

Experimental Materials
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center
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RHETORIC OF THE PARAGRAPH

This unit on the paragraph parallels the tenth grade unit on the sentence. It attempts to provide a partial rhetoric of the paragraph and is based on the belief that some kinds of paragraphs, like sentences, have a kind of "grammar", i. e., work according to a series of systems--and that what is crucially important in these systems is the way in which one binds sentences to one another in formal patterns. Moreover, it is written in the belief that it will clarify what goes with the sense of structure which we feel in reading some carefully written paragraphs. Perhaps, it will help students create paragraphs in which the reader feels a similar sense of structure. If it does neither of these things for your students, it will only have failed where failure is common.

In narrative and descriptive writing, the sentence is the unit, and the paragraph seems to have very little significance. The typical narrative does not seem to have been planned by paragraphs; they merely group the sentences--each of which represents a unit of time--into larger units of time. The progression within the narrative paragraph is chronological; all of the sentences seem to be on the same footing, and one seldom has the sense that he is running into a superordinate sentence to which others are subordinate. The relation of the sentences within this kind of paragraph is like that of seconds to minutes or of minutes to hours and there are no sentences which, like minutes spent in fear, seem to consume (or subsume) everything after for a space.

All is changed in expository writing. In expository writing, one may speak of two kinds of paragraphs. One kind is like the bricks or stones that constitute a wall; the other is like the mortar that holds the bricks or stones together. The second kind are generally short; they consist of introductions, transitions, sometimes summaries and conclusions. The other kind are usually longer; in serious writing: they constitute the substance of a piece of writing.

It is with these paragraphs that we are concerned here.

What we say about expository paragraphs is based on work by Professor Francis Christensen and by Viola Waterhouse. Professor Christensen's original paragraph work has been modified and combined with Viola Waterhouse's insights about dependent sentences. Such a combination seems to allow both for a more accurate description of paragraphs and for using a method of description as a basis for helping students acquire a sense of form which can shape their own paragraphs.

The traditional approach to the paragraph is by way of the topic sentence and the so-called methods of paragraph development. The writer, it is suggested, begins with a topic sentence, which blocks out the areas to be covered by the paragraph, and then chooses, to fill in the area, one of the half-dozen or so methods of paragraph development. If my own experience is typical, the fault of this approach is that no one writes paragraphs in this way. The reason is that the so-called methods of paragraph development are simply methods of development or support no more relevant to the paragraph than to the sentence or to units longer than the paragraph. Exemplification, for example, is a method of development. But a flock of examples may be dropped parenthetically into a sentence; a paragraph may be a massed series of examples or it may present a single extended example; and a single example may be spread over several paragraphs. If these methods are not methods of paragraph development, we must find some other basis for teaching the paragraph--both how to write it and how to read it.

What is a Paragraph?

The first problem is that of definition. There are two ways of approaching the definition. First, paragraphing is a visual device for grouping sentences and, by grouping some, separating them from others. As a visual unit, the paragraph is a group of sentences whose first line is indented and whose last line, except by chance, is not filled out. There are other visual clues in use, as in hanging indention and in block style. And sometimes a column of type may be set solid with a ▱ or other typographical device to group the sentences into paragraphs.

This definition of the paragraph is parallel to that which defines a sentence as a group of words that begin with a capital and end with a period and that which defines a word as a group of letters set off fore and aft by white space. The trouble with these definitions is the trouble we have with the definition of an automobile as what lies between the front and rear bumpers. By the use of these definitions, we can identify an automobile or a word or sentence or paragraph, but they do not help us to understand it. Why group just these sentences, these words, these letters? For a composition course we need to understand why we group what we do.

One answer to the question makes the paragraph a merely mechanical unit. Often today the paragraph is no more than that. In much newspaper and magazine writing, where the printed columns are narrow and the editors' rating of their readers' intelligence may be low (this does not apply to the *New Yorker*), the paragraphs are arbitrarily limited to two or three short sentences. If the copy is not written with paragraphs of that length, the copy reader, more or less arbitrarily, cuts it up.[1] I have had this happen twice to material of my own. But in these cases the long paragraphs had been carefully structured and the incisions were skillfully made at the joints, so that no harm was done. But if the paragraphs of a piece of any length are made too short, as they often are, they do not serve their purpose. Their purpose is to shape sentences into a well-formed, well-shaped, segment of prose. If they are too short, then the *reader has to do* the forming and shaping. The problem of grouping the sentences

[1] This description probably applies to much non-journalistic writing. Some writers of mature essays and of other forms of discursive prose write continuous text on which they later impose breaks at the suggestion of fancy or intuition.

becomes the problem of grouping the paragraphs. Unless some device is found to do this for him, the reader has to sort out the random paragraphs and combine them mentally into more or less structured ones.

Random and structured: What do these mean? We will look for an answer in the concept of layers or levels of structure that we used in describing the sentence and in the concept of coordination and subordination. Coordinate elements are of the same order or rank. Put two words together and you have a compound word (web foot, web-footed, web-press); put two sentences together (as in this one) and you have a compound sentence. Subordinate elements are of a lower order or rank than the superordinate elements they are associated with. A verb, noun, or adjective cluster or an absolute is of a lower rank than a sentence.

We started in the unit on the sentence with the two-level sentence, which has a main or base clause as its first level and an added subordinate element as its second level: "One of the most interesting of the Pacific islands was Laysan, a tiny scrap of soil which is a far outrider of the Hawaiian chain"--Rachel Carson. Two-level sentences may have only one added element, like the one just quoted, or they may have a parallel series of second-level elements, like this:

1 At one end of the spectrum lies nuclear physics,
  2 thoroughly confused by dozens of elementary particles,
  2 employing bizarre mathematics,
  2 acknowledging the limits set by indeterminism,
  2 realizing that even its logic is now assailable,
  2 confronted by mysteries which seem to lie within its realm, but which nevertheless are incomprehensible.--Vannevar Bush

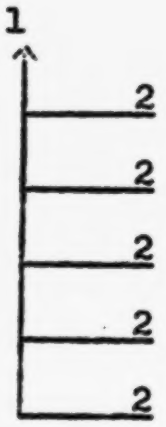
We went on from the two-level to the multi-level sentence, in which each added element is subordinate to the one immediately before (or above) it, like this:

1 And I stood there,
  2 in the sudden descent of dismay that came with their letters,
    3 fingering the envelope,
      4 addressed in my father's rather beautiful hand
        5 (its sweeping flow always suggested some freer, other side of him I had never seen,

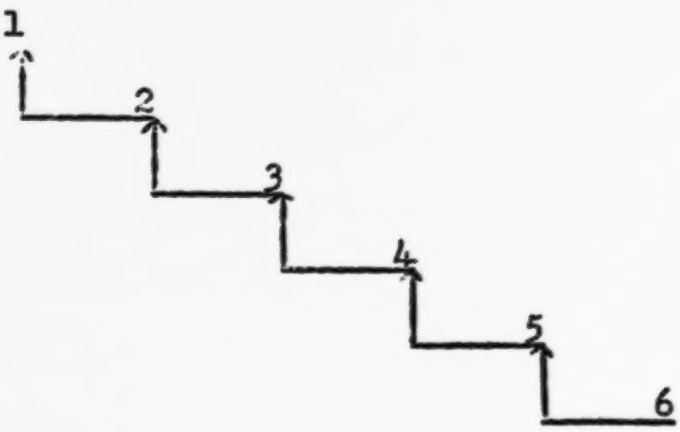
6 as the sight of his bare knees, in tennis shorts, suggested to me as a child another existence outside the known one as my father.)--Nadine Gordimer

The diagrams below are an attempt to make these relations graphic. The vertical arrows point from the subordinate to the superordinate levels. In the two-level sentence all the second-level elements are coordinate with one another and all communicate immediately with the top level. In the multi-level sentence there is a chain of command; any subordinate level can communicate with the top level only through intermediaries, through channels as we now say.

Two-Level



Multi-Level



Now, these structural relationships are as evident in the paragraph as in the sentence. Here the same method of analysis is applied to a paragraph.

1 This book is intended as a sort of handbook for young recruits in the gay cause of common sense.

2 It indicates where the main armies of ignorance are now encamped and tells in secret code what garrisons are undermanned or mutinous.

2 It tries to show the use of cover and camouflage and the techniques of infiltration and retreat.

2 It maps road blocs and mine fields and shows how to rig a booby trap.

2 It warns of counterespionage and gives--again in code--the five infallible signs to know a fool.

--Bergen Evans, The Natural History of Nonsense, p. 3.

This paragraph exemplifies the method of analysis and notation that will be used in this unit. The above representation of the structure of this paragraph assumes, however, certain concepts: independent and dependent sentences, coordination and levels. These terms are defined, explained, and illustrated in the student packet which the teacher should carefully study after becoming familiar with the unit on The Rhetoric of the Sentence (Grade 10) and Viola Waterhouse's essay on dependent sentences reproduced at the end of this packet. Definitions of the descriptive terms used in this unit together with additional notes and comments are provided below for the convenience of the teacher.

Definitions

The terminology with which the students will be working, like all terminology, may appear cumbersome and tend to become a hindrance rather than an aid in teaching them how sentences are bound one to another. If you are full of patience and encouragement, noble virtues in a teacher, the mastery of the terms should provide a profitable tool. The teacher and student should understand that the system of notation is a means to an end and not an end in itself; sometimes the system of dependency in a paragraph may be legitimately represented in more than one way. The system of notation is only as good as what it tells you about the relation between form and meaning in a segment of prose. Since the students have used much of this system of notation before in studying the syntax sequence in Grades 8, 9, and 10, the terminology should not buffalo them now.

1. Sentence: In this unit, we will use a rather simple-minded definition of a sentence; we will say that a sentence is a group of words which begins with a capital and concludes with end punctuation. The definition will allow for focusing on the relationships among sentences and will prevent one's becoming overly involved with the relationships among clauses, phrases, absolutes, and so forth, which appear within a sentence. (The latter kinds of relationships are as im-

portant to paragraph as to sentence structure, but we will postpone examining them until the twelfth grade unit on the paragraph).

2. Independent sentence: Generally, in this unit, an independent sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph; it may be dependent in some way upon a sentence or sentences in a previous paragraph, but such dependency may be regarded as 'obviated' by indentation. Independent sentences within paragraphs are sentences which display none of the five kinds of subordination described in the student packet.

3. Dependent sentence: A dependent sentence is defined in the Waterhouse essay at the end of the unit and in the student packet.

Subordinate Independent Sentence: Described in the student packet.

4. The kinds of dependency or subordination: Three categories of grammatical dependency and two categories of lexical subordination which bind sentences to one another have been established: The first three categories are matters of grammatical structure, syntactic structure; the fourth and fifth are not--subordination by expansion or repetition is a lexical matter--depending on the sense of semantic equivalence or semantic shift as a base form is moved from context to context, from form class to form class.

a. Sequential subordination:

Sequential subordination is always indicated by the presence of a conjunctive adverb, adverbial phrase, or conjunction at the head or near the head of a sentence. These words or phrases indicate that the sentence in which they appear is an addition to or qualification of the preceding sentence. A complete list of them may be impossible at this time, but we will postulate that their class is a closed one. Below you will find a list that contains many of them:

Nevertheless
But
Or
Nor
And
Again
Similarly
Consequently
Still
Moreover
Likewise
Furthermore
Even
Therefore
Thus
For example
For instance
Next
In addition
However
First, second, third, etc.
Finally
Hence
So
Now
Besides

Examples of this kind of subordination can be found in any competent modern argumentative or expository prose; you may wish to add examples to those found in the students' materials.

b. Referential Subordination:

Referential subordination, unlike sequential subordination, gives us a sense of going back to the previous sentence rather than adding to or augmenting it. The referential is to the sequential as a looped lasso is to a cattle prod. Referential subordination is signaled by the use of pronouns, pro-verbs, and demonstrative adjectives such as "this," "that," and "such." Words like "the first," "the second," etc., and "the former" and "the latter" and "here" (when used as pronouns or nouns) are also means of subordinating by reference. Examples of this kind of subordination are plentiful in any essay or longer work. It is probably the most frequently used of the kinds of subordination.

c. Completive Dependency:

Completive dependency occurs when an "incomplete" sentence requires that it be fitted into a structure in the preceding sentence if it is to make any sense. Two kinds of completive dependency have been distinguished: the first involves a response to a question (not all responses are completive) and the second involves the making of a complete sentence of a segment "which can constitute a complete unit on a lower level"--words, phrases, relative clauses, etc. Completive sentences are usually short and usually consist of no more than one clause.

Students, in the past, have been warned to stay away from this kind of sentence and have been punished with marginal notes indicating an incomplete sentence. However such sentences occur often enough in professional writing that students should be made aware of them; they should try to understand their decorum in professional writing, and they should be encouraged to use them where they are appropriate. Examples of this kind of dependency may be more rare than sequential and referential subordination, but they can be found in almost any essay.

d. Subordination by repetition:

Completive dependency occurs more often in speech or in written dialogue than in expository or argumentative discourse, probably because the speaker can revise on the spot; in written prose, there appears a kind of subordination closely related to completive subordination as it occurs in speech: the repetition of a key word or root. This repetition takes three forms, plain repetition, the repetition of a word root as part of a word placed in a new form class by the affixes attached, and the repetition of a word in an obviously different syntactic position. The student packet explains how such repetition functions grammatically and rhetorically, and examples similar to those in the student's materials can be found readily.

e. Subordination by appositive expansion:

Subordination by appositive expansion cannot be identified by examining rhetorical and grammatical structures. It employs synonyms; a synonym, for the purposes of this unit, is a word or phrase whose referent is the same item or part of the same item or class of items as some preceding word or phrase even though its "meaning" may be different (cf. "Words and their Meanings," Grade 8). A good test as to whether a word or phrase is an appositive expansion of a previous word or phrase is to place it after its "synonyms" in an appositive position preceded by a comma or an i. e. Appositive-expansion subordination occurs about as frequently as completive dependency; it usually occurs when an author separates out members of a class, when he moves from the more "general" to the more "specific", etc. Students may tend to use one form of this kind of subordination if they have been encouraged to "avoid repetition" and strive for "elegant variation." Its relatively low frequency of occurrence in professional writing suggests that the encouragement may need to go in the opposite direction.

The occurrence of more than one kind of subordination:

Sometimes a sentence is marked for subordination in more than one way: "We could bomb Red China. But to do so would be foolhardy." Usually when there is more than one marker, the sentence will be marked for both sequential and referential subordination. But it may be marked for both sequential dependency and either repetitive or appositive-expansive subordination. More than one marker rarely appears in a dependent sentence which completes another structure. Occasionally there will occur more than one marker of sequential dependency and usually in such combinations as: "But even..." But, for example,..." etc. Double marking, especially when it combines marking for sequential and referential dependency or marking for repetitive and expansive-appositive subordination creates a kind of tension between the on-going, additive movement of some kinds of dependency and the backward movement of the other kinds, between the pull of the lasso and the push of the cow prod; and such a tension may be most effectively used when a writer shifts his focus, especially in the middle of a paragraph.

When one analyzes paragraphs, he should, in cases of double marking, note its occurence and note both markers. We have, in the student packet, suggested that the 'closeness' of binding between sentences may be arranged in a kind of hierarchy:

(1) completive - . . . .- (closest binding)

(2) sequential - ―――――

(3) referential - ═════

(4) repetitive - ≡≡≡≡≡

(5) appositive-expansive - ≣≣≣≣≣ - (least close binding)

We have also suggested that when sentences are dependent in two ways and on two sentences, the operative dependency is the one which binds closest; however, this is a matter for judgment and discussion.

Paragraph Structure and Logic:

Certainly the most important consideration in looking at the system of dependencies in a paragraph is the extent to which it muddles or clarifies its 'logic,' its semantic "form and pressure" and the extent to which it allows one to see what is supposedly rhetorically or logically equal as equal, what is logically or rhetorically connected or connected by the system of markers of dependency and in a way which 'outlines' the relationship. What we mean by this is illustrated in the analysis of paragraphs in the student packet. (Both students and teacher should do analyses of the kind described on the paragraph in the unit, on their own paragraphs and on those of others; then the connections between form and meaning will come clear.)

A note on coordination:

Subordinate sentences which occupy the same level, and which are generally parallel in syntax--or give a sense of parallelism--may be described as coordinate sentences. Coordination occurs as a self-conscious rhetorical device most frequently when an author uses a cataloging technique--i.e. giving several examples of the same thing; several reasons for the existence of one situation or whatever; a series of coordinate sentences is often marked for subordination to a single 'head' sentence (usually a level one or level two) by the repetition in each coordinate sentence of a pronoun whose reference is contained only in the head sentence or by the repetition in each of a word or morpheme which appears only in the head sentence. Other coordinate sentences may be marked by sequence markers such as "for example" or "again":

1 The Germans in the second world war were radically short of strategic materials during their Russian campaigns.
  2 For example, they had almost no ammunition for three months in 1943.
  2 Again, in the winter of 1943 they had almost no winter clothing.
  2 And in late '43, during the retreat, they had no food, no ammunition, no decent clothing.

Again and And here may seem to make the second level-two sentence subordinate to the first, and the third, to the second, but actually, the parallelism of syntactic structure among the three sentences and the pronoun reference back to the head sentence ("they") combine to give the sentences the sense of coordination at a single level. That they are coordinate in syntax and dependent on a single head sentence reinforces the feeling that each sentence makes an equal contribution to confirming the point of the head sentence. In this case, as our discussion has suggested, the paragraph may be described in at least two ways; what we are suggesting is that coordination or parallelism of syntactic structure takes precedence over a subordinating marker. But pointing out the markers suggests something about the ordering of the three coordinate sentences.

The students' attention should be directed to coordination when it occurs; and they should be encouraged to try their hand at writing such sentences.

The sample analyses of paragraphs provided for the students should be gone over thoroughly and the students should be given opportunity to ask questions concerning them. After a while they may wish to dispense with the packet's picture of what is going on in the paragraphs analyzed; they should be encouraged to try for better analyses and to defend them. After the students have practiced with the analyses, they should be presented with the unanalyzed paragraphs and asked to assign sentences to their respective levels and to note the method or methods of subordination. The paragraphs are analyzed for the teacher below; though other analyses certainly are possible, they may give the teacher something to go on as she develops her capacity to handle the system of notation representing structure.

I.

1 This new attitude toward foreign policy stems from an intellectual disposition which is deeply embedded in the American folk-lore of social action.

2 That disposition shuns elaborate philosophies and consistent theories. (reference and repetition)

3 It bows to the facts which are supposed to "tell their own story" and "not to lie." (reference)

3 It accepts only one test of the truth of a proposition: that it works. (reference)

3 It expects the problems of the social world to yield to a series of piecemeal empirical attacks, unencumbered by preconceived notions and comprehensive planning. (reference)

4 If a social problem proves obstinate, it must be made to yield to a new empirical attack, armed with more facts more thoroughly understood. (repetition)

II.

1 The program of studies in a comprehensive high school is made up of general subjects, required of all, and of electives.

2 The general subjects usually are, and I think they should be (including

the ninth grade), four years of English; three or four years of the social studies; one year of science; and one year of mathematics, usually either general mathematics or algebra. (repetition)

2 In those general classes, enrolling all students, there will be a wide diversity of ability, a diversity so wide as to make it impossible for a teacher to adapt his teaching to the whole range in the class.
(reference and repetition)

3 Therefore students should be grouped in separate classes by ability, but the grouping should be subject by subject. (sequence)

4 Thus a student might be in a top-level class in English but in an average one in mathematics. (sequence)

4 Three levels of grouping are probably enough--one for the more able in the subject, another for the middle group, and a third for the slow readers, who need teachers especially qualified to teach them. (repetition)

5 However, grouping is not recommended in the twelfth-grade course dealing with problems in American democracy.
(sequence and repetition)

6 Here great value can accrue from the discussion of problems by students of all levels of ability and of diverse interests and backgrounds. (reference)

III.

1 In studying how accommodation is achieved, we may begin by observing that it is the philosophers, using Aristotle's broad terminology, who work out and promote the plural interpretation.

2 They propose the terms for accomodating their immaterial belief to the concrete and materialized imagery of the fundamentalists.
(reference and repetition)

3 Thus it was the Cambridge Platonist, John Smith, who took the initiative about the devil. (sequence)

4 John Smith was not addressing the fundamentalists who believed in the personified devil; in fact what he said about the whole matter was not meant to trouble the fundamentalists at all. (repetition)

5 He was addressing men who were unable to believe in the personified devil, and yet were still in essential communion with the fundamentalists. (reference and repetition)

6 For they did believe in the spirit of the devil which, as everyone knows, is in all of us. (sequence)

7 In this accommodation the Christian Platonists gave up trying to believe what they could not believe. (reference)

8 They went on believing that which in its essence their fundamentalist neighbors believed. (reference)

9 Thus they could continue to live in the same community with them. (sequence and reference)

IV.

1 Interesting, and sometimes profoundly touching--that the trial of Socrates is; but also it is quite confusing, quite difficult to understand.

2 Modern men trying to grapple with it must start with a short book by Socrates' pupil Plato. (reference)

3 (It was the first book I ever read in classical Greek, I remember, and I have respected it for something like thirty-five years.) (reference)

3 The book suffers--like so many classical works--from having a

stupidly translated title. (repetition)

4 Usually *it* is given in English as *The Apology of Socrates*. (reference)

5 *In fact*, it ought to be called *The Defense of Socrates*. (sequence)

4 *It* is supposed to be three speeches delivered by Socrates at his trial. (reference)

5 *Their* tone is confident, easy, even combative; there is nothing apologetic about them. (reference)

5 The Greek word *apologia* does mean 'defense,' but it was silly of the translators to take it straight over into English, without considering its different implications in our language. (repetition)

V.

1 And because the purpose of the confrontation is to discern truth, there are rules of evidence and of parliamentary procedure by which a loyal man will consider himself bound when he exercises the right to publish opinions.

2 For the right to freedom of speech is no license to deceive, and willful misrepresentation is a violation of its principles. (completion)

3 It is sophistry to pretend that in a free country a man has some sort of inalienable or constitutional *right* to deceive his fellow men. (repetition)

4 There is no more *right* to deceive than there is a right to swindle, cheat, or to pick pockets. (repetition)

5 It may be inexpedient to arraign every public liar, as we try to arraign other *swindlers*.

5 It may be a poor policy to have too many laws which encourage litigation about matters of opinion. (coordination)

6 But, in principle, there can be no immunity for lying in any of its protean forms. (sequence)

Paragraph Revision: Some Notes:

The point of this unit is not to teach terminology or even to teach the analysis of paragraphs; it is to train students in the use of a descriptive instrument which may help them to get clear about problems in their writing of paragraphs and to exploit the formal possibilities which they have at their disposal in rewriting paragraphs. The operations that the students are asked to perform on the student paragraphs are a sort of mechanical doodling, but they should force them to experiment with various methods of tying sentences one to another. Once they have doodled and come up with a paragraph which they see as 'working,' they should be able to defend the system of dependencies--the relationships, coordinations, and subordinations--which they have established within the paragraph and show how it gives clarity or radiance to the logical or contextual relationships fixed within the paragraph.

You may find that students use sequential markers profusely and without regard for their meaning when they become aware of their existence; the twelfth grade unit on syntax and rhetoric contains some exercises on this problem that might be useful here if such tendencies develop in students' writing.

Revising paragraphs is hard, demanding work--even more so than revising sentences because of the length of the unit. Since paragraph revision is so demanding the teacher should carefully avoid making burdensome assignments. It is unlikely that the students will desire or even undertake the necessary experimentation that accompanies revision if they are led to feel that they must simply get their writing done as quickly as possible. But revising paragraphs should not be an activity limited to the students. The teacher should also revise both the students' paragraphs and her own, and if possible create an atmosphere in which both teacher and student bring to bear their knowledge of structuring paragraphs or segments of prose that need or might need revision. In addition, since the revision of paragraphs often leads to a revision of sentences, the teacher might profitably review with the students and apply the principles of the rhetoric of the sentence as set forth in previous units.

A Note on the Independent Sentence:

The corresponding section in the students' packet suggests that the first sentence of the paragraph limits to some extent what the author can do in succeeding sentences; the second limits what can be done in the third, and so on. The importance of this section is to lead the students to observe that a revision of the independent sentence may be necessary if the writer is to go in the direction he wishes. The description of the limitations and possibilities at any point in a discourse would take pages. Rather scanty discussions have, of necessity, been substituted for full ones; the teacher might wish to enlarge upon these discussions.

Summary:

When teaching this unit, the teacher should strive to maintain a flexible, critical attitude as he works with the method, observations and terminology presented in this unit. A dogmatic presentation of the approach suggested here will likely lead to the result of all dogmatic presentations in the area of rhetoric. Probably not all the implications of the method have been explored, or even sensed. Modifications may also be necessary at various points along the way. This unit, in short, is to be taken as a starting point, not as a summary of all that is to be said of the paragraph.

And this leads to a note about the twelfth grade unit on the paragraph. That unit might be read with profit by a teacher of this unit. It offers suggestions about the relationships between sentence structures and paragraph structures and relationships among paragraphs. It may clarify some of the problems this unit raises but does not solve or even attempt to solve. The two units on the paragraph form a sequence, even though the method employed in each is markedly different.

INDEPENDENT AND DEPENDENT SENTENCES

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6

A CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH

Teacher Packet

THE MEANING OF THE WHOLE COMPOSITION: AMBIGUITIES, ANALOGIES, CONTRARIES

Grade 11

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Experimental Materials
Nebraska Curriculum Development Center

THE MEANING OF THE WHOLE COMPOSITION: AMBIGUITIES, ANALOGIES, CONTRARIES

This unit follows up the eighth grade unit on "Meaning", the ninth on "Uses of Language", and the tenth on "Induction." But it does different things--or rather does the kind of thing that the 8th and 9th grade units did but in greater depth and for whole essays. The unit may be strange and confusing to a person who has never been in contact with its sort of approach, strange because it seems to be, yet is not, doing what other sorts of units one is already familiar with are also doing. This unit offers no answers. It offers rather a method for working with language. It offers an art as opposed to a science--an art without rules, formulae, etc. which can be a guide. Its approach to such things as the meaning of an essay, its language, the analysis of its thought and so on is implicit in units which we have studied. (cf. supra)

To do this unit, one must constantly--one can't emphasize that enough--constantly have whatever is being studied in front of him. It may seem in the student packet as if one is being told both to look at the subject (e.g. the language of the essay) and look at what he is familiar with--ordinary life matters--at the same time. And one is. One is being asked to look at the employment or uses of words and at the situations which do or do not suit with these employments. One is being invited to look at employments which lead the reader to understand a situation and employments which mislead him by asking him to see a situation which is unlike another one as implicitly like it--susceptible of being dealt with in terms of like words. This mistaken employment of a word or group of words in a situation to which they seem suited but are not invites the reader to engage in a kind of linguistic-logical fantasy. We are in this unit concerned with how people employ words to think.

The best preparation for doing this unit is to read through and work through John Wilson's Thinking with Concepts (Cambridge University Press). Though this book includes some remarks which one might not wish to swallow whole hog, its general approach to the analysis of the language of a piece of writing is remarkably similar to that prescribed in this unit. Though Wilson's book was published in 1963 and this unit written in 1964, we arrived at our ways of working independently--the authors of this unit did not know of Mr. Wilson's book until the unit was almost finished. But it is not accidental that our ways of working are similar to his inasmuch as both Mr. Wilson and we were influenced by the ways of working with language of recent British "analytic" philosophy.

In doing this unit, one learns to do the most elementary things--to do them again. We are normally "put out" if we are told to listen to what we say, but that is the first thing this unit wants the student to do (and you, also). Here you are asked to hear what employments of a term you--or an author--are making in a situation, what situations 'go' with what employments, the extent to which the present situation is like those in which the employment does assuredly 'go' and the extent to which it is different--perceptibly so. We are concerned with when we shift employments without noticing. There is no animosity involved in asking a person to listen to what he says--no "You're crazy--listen to what you say!" Listening is part of a method, an art. Just as a painter must learn once again to look at what he sees, so one who examines language must learn once again to listen to what he says.

You as a teacher--and the authors and students of this unit--must start at the beginning and learn this method yourself. You must work out all of the "assignments." The authors of this unit worked out its problems just once; what is presented is a "first try" so to speak (were this unit not open, it would not be true to its aim--to teach a method). The student will probably work these problems out just once, but you will need to work them out at least twice--once so that you have something to "give" the students and then again--literally--so that you can work on the same level as the student. What you will do in learning this method is to work with words which sound strange in a certain context. You will work with the uses of these words in ordinary language and then in situations, generally situations in some way analogous to the one under examination, in which these employments naturally come into play (or ridiculously come into play). By looking at normal uses and wildly abnormal ones, what is funny about a slightly strange, slightly nonsensical use may come clear. We work with analogies here. I worked with an analogy when I compared one's listening to what he says with a painter's looking at what he sees. But when we look at analogies to the use of a certain word in a certain context to be clear about how language is used, the logical point is not whether we use good analogies or not but whether we can learn to be aware of the purpose of an analogy--of how far something is analogous and what light it casts on our own use of language.

The 'B' exercises in this unit ask that one work with contrary statements. You may not have worked with contraries, but they emerge from trying to get clear about why an author is saying something--to whom he is saying it; they emerge from a study of the full context of a piece of writing: "What would you say, in the same context, to say the opposite of what someone else has said in that context?"

You may or may not be the person for this unit--it all depends on how frustrated you are willing to get, for frustration is one of the keys of this method. You, of course, will not mind tackling something which will be at first and for som time frustrating. (Your students may or may not). You must be frustrated, and you will not mind being stuck in the mud as you go prospecting; and as you and your students are stuck, you must be able to "whet the appetite" of those students who do not want to tackle anything that is not "pat." A word on what you can do for your students: much of what you have read about teaching may have encouraged you to do more and more for your students. But here you can actually do very little for them because we are teaching a method, teaching something they can only learn on their own if they learn it at all. And the unit should work best with those you would least expect it to work with. It works best with those students whom one normally thinks of as "lively"--so full of life that they have often not been too attentive to their studies; it works well with students who have here-to-fore been too good at their work, those 'older' and 'wiser' folk--regarding their work--who have many good answers--too many and all of them "black-and-white" answers, answers which show that their formulators are not really involved in what they are doing. To help such students both in the things which need to be done and in the things which they have to do, you will have to make them slow down; they will, almost to a person, want to read quickly, to settle for a few uses from ordinary language, and take up the first analogy to a usage that strikes them. They will need your help, help to read one sentence at a time--perhaps over and over, help in listening--to a sentence over and over, help in getting a full view, a good number of uses from ordinary language and ordinary situations similar to those with which they are dealing, and help in considering a good number of possible analogies rather than just the first one or ones which come to their minds. They need your help in slowing down. That may mean you will not finish this unit. You may not get to all of the essays. That is all right. It is better to go slowly and do even just one, than to go too fast.

The students will need your help in writing informally also; no doubt they have received some instruction in writing formally, but that sort of writing will not help here. It will hinder. The sorts of things they are doing in this unit will require all of their concentration, and writing with an eye to decorum and external form may detract from that; even such considerations as syntax or spelling may detract from their first concern here. Their work in this unit should be judged only on content and not on form; and they should be encouraged to write as they think--only as they think and all that they think. Have them put on paper all of their thoughts where they themselves can examine them. That is what the authors of this unit have tried to do.

Once students begin to catch on to the method of this unit, they will begin to latch on to this or that point within an essay, and do extensive work on it. They are likely to begin looking at the whole essay from the perspective they have of that one point, and you can help them to take the whole essay into account: you can remind them of what they already know, that there is more than one point to the whole essay.

That is about all you can do; if you are prone to do more, which I hope you are not, nothing more that you do can help. It may hinder. Try to emulate the methods of the teachers whose work we describe below. If this sounds too cautious, do not dismiss it. Whenever this is 'all you can do,' you take a risk. Take it. The student is left on his own. You can not try to do too much for him. You can not let that lead you into not working yourself.

Now--what about the class. We have very little to say here, except some recommendations, all of which rely on this one belief: in this sort of study nobody's opinion is more valuable than the students', not the teacher's or the author's. I suggest that you rely a good deal on class discussion, especially when you ask to see some of their work. Let them read some of their notes, put forth some of their ideas, offer the analogous situations they have found. Let them remind each other of the ordinary uses of a word or phrase. As a part of encouraging the students to use their own ideas, you may want to hold some students back and let others go ahead. If you do so, do not be surprised if some of those you held back are soon ahead of some of those you let go ahead and if some of those you let go ahead are soon behind. Do not be surprised; rest assured that even this going ahead and dropping back is helpful to many students.

I. The Method of this Unit: Background

The method of assessment of meaning used in this unit is based on the work of several writers. These writers are difficult and complex. However, the teacher who is willing to dig and dig and dig and allow himself to be puzzled and worried by work with language may profit from looking at the following books:

(1) O. K. Bouwsma, Philosophical Essays--particularly the essay on "The Blue Book" as introducing the method and the rest of the essays as illustrating it. (University of Nebraska Press.)

(2) Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and the Brown Books (Basil Blackwell).
__________________, Philosophical Investigations.

(3) John Wilson, Thinking with Concepts (Cambridge, 1963).

(4) Charles E. Caton, ed., Philosophy and Ordinary Language (Urbana, Illinois); available in paperback. This is a collection of essays that investigates (from a variety of perspectives) problems raised by ordinary language.

II. Essays Which Provide Background as to the Method of This Unit:

Ordinary Language

by Gilbert Ryle

[The first thing which we ask students to do in examining essays is to look at words or phrases which seem to be employed in strange--slightly curious--fashions; and to lay these employments beside ordinary employments. The philosophic background of this activity, its purpose and use are described in the essay which follows. Mr. Ryle is Professor of Philosophy at Oxford. As Mr. Ryle says, such investigations as are proposed in this unit are not confined to commonplace language; they do look at the ordinary uses--ordinary coinage--or any vocabulary, however ordinary or jargonistic or technical--to see when the coinage is being abused. At the center of this essay is the conception of a word as like a tool having "uses" in certain situations and not in others.]

the contrary were stated (Phase III, B exercises). The last part of the essay analyzes special problems raised by this kind of language analysis.]

On Examining the Meaning of a Piece

by O. K. Bouwsma

[The following essay is excerpted from O. K. Bouwsma's "The Blue Book" from his *Philosophical Essays*. Mr. Bouwsma is ostensibly describing the method of working with concepts and seeking clarity used by Ludwig Wittgenstein, the Austrian-British philosopher whose *Blue Book* Bouwsma is here reviewing. The essay first describes the various kinds of *arts* which are central to working with language as this unit proposes that one and one's students work. One should particularly note the emphasis on discussion and the kind of discussion here proposed. Bouwsma secondly describes three phases in analyzing the concepts--the sense of the language of an essay. The first involves noticing unusual uses of words, (uses which strike one as strange--"quickening the sense of the queer"); the second involves the presentation of the meaning of a word or phrase--the setting forth of its common employments and perhaps the presenting of words and contexts which go with those common employments:

> The principle involved is simple. Some words together in a certain order, taken together with certain other words in a certain order do not make sense. So what we need is to remind ourselves of the sense of the words which make up the given sentence in order to see precisely what the deviation, what the difference is.

The first two phases which Bouwsma describes are Phase I as described in the student packet--locating words and phrases which sound strange and laying bare their ordinary uses; Bouwsma's phases I and II always come into the A exercises.

The third phase which Bouwsma describes is a more complicated version of what we have called Phase II of the A exercises in this packet--the examination of analogous contexts in which the phrase under examination might be used perfectly profitably and the identification of the difference between these situations and ours. One may also in this phase use analogous contexts which are deliberately and radically wild to get at some subtly wild approximation of the word in the context we are examining. Or one may invent phrases analogous to the phrase with which one is working--analogous in the sense that they work strangely in their context in a fashion which reveals the strangeness of the phrase which we are examining and its usage in its context.

Bouwsma's examples of each of these moves are worth careful pondering, for they may help a teacher to get clear about how he may help a student toward clarity.

(Phase III and the techniques of the B exercises are not explicitly discussed is Bouwsma's essay though Phases II and III are so closely related to one another that Bouwsma's discussion of "presentation of meaning" may assist one to understand how one looks for an author's point as well as how one looks for his confusions.)7

Part I:

Essay I: A exercises:

The temptation will be for students to be puzzled by the author's notebook or overwhelmed by it so that they don't see any other problems in the essay. They perhaps whould be encouraged to work with other phrases and the concepts which seem to go with them. For instance:

"obtaining justice"

Then back to--"useless"

"why do we *have* capital punishment"

back to--"useless"

"all this *adds* up"

the criminal
the criminal
a prisoner

Essay I: B exercises

Here I would pass out the original essay on p. 13 (on dittoed sheets) and let the students work out their own contrary version before they look at the packet's version. Then they can engage in fruitful discussion, setting their contrary version beside the packet's

Part II:

Part II is an essay about on the same level as the essay in Part I. The point of the section is to force both teacher and student to work with the ordinary uses of the underlined words, setting forth analogous contexts in which the criteria for the application of one or another use are met and those in which they are not and setting forth analogous words and situations which may have led the essayist to think of things in this way. Finally one should try to formulate the point of the essay and its contrary.

Since the essay itself is about the meanings or employments of words, it should permit one to raise, as one is analyzing, many of the issues raised and, hopefully, settled in the background essays in the teacher packet. For this student essay is full of many of the problems relating to the way in which we conceive of the meaning or words and the employment of concepts which are also, posed in a more sophisticated form, the problems of the philosophers and linguists whom Ryle, Bouwsma and Wilson are opposing. The exercises here, then, ask that one use a technique for analyzing the meaning of a whole composition in looking at a whole composition about meaning.

Part III: A exercises:

The A notes in the student packet do not, of course, exhaust the possibilities of the essay. The students should go on.

Now they can look at the expression "learning" and think of others that it suggests; they may be sure that these others will be helpful in writing their contrary essay. I'm thinking of expressions like--

What are you learning?

What are you studying?

What is she teaching you?

Are you learning anything?

Where did you learn that?

Now that you know that what are you going to do with it?

One might try to get in mind an aspect of the word "learning" which one can use in this essay: "When you learn, you learn something; and what you learn is not the same in each case. You can learn to do calculus: learn the names of auto parts; learn to give speeches; learn to read and write."

Maybe now one can start toward the controversy to which he is to address his contrary remarks: If someone comes to us to get an education, he is coming to learn something. But what? What will one teach him? Does learning only the names of auto parts constitute an education? Or only learning calculus? Or learning only to give speeches? One supposes not. Getting an education is learning more than any one of these things. If someone is learning only one thing it seems that he is not getting an education, or at least that he is getting a very narrow education. And now one can hear President Griswold's lament about 'the decline of the liberal arts as a force in our national educational system.' 'These studies are disappearing under a layer of vocational and other substitutes like the landscape in the ice age' (paragraph 10). So students are now being taught or are learning only one thing. And when a student is only being taught one thing, one speaks of that as vocational in nature. When he finishes being taught that one thing, he will know how to do only that one thing. A person with an education which is liberal in nature will have learned to do a number of things; and, upon finishing his education, what he has learned will be then basic for doing a number of things.

Now one can suppose that a person has come to get an education. What is one going to teach him? One thing or many things? One knows that education is learning and because one knows that learning, when it constitutes an education, cannot be restricted to one thing, he knows a student must be taught many things. But how many? There is not time enough to teach him everything. So one will teach him some of the basic or more general subjects that seem to touch upon all areas of living. Then if he wants a specific subject he can take it.

Now we have pointed out this much--that you do not go to a liberal-education-place to learn one specific job. The place is going to try to give you an education.

Now go back to the essay, to the controversy involved, and to the matter of an opposing essay. So far the notemaker has tried to get another perspective from which we can write. The students are to write in opposition to Horn. Do they have any ideas which might be a view which would oppose this view? For example, we have just run onto one thing which at least provides such a view and makes the connection between that view and what the notemaker has been saying. They might run onto other things, but I have run onto this one. In his essay Horn makes a comment which lets us know what he considers his view and the opposing view to be.

> It is time that they stopped lamenting the decline of liberal education and recognized that the problem is not liberal education versus vocational education, but liberal education and vocational education. (paragraph 29)

The "versus" may be the key to it all. Horn wants to eliminate it; I feel that I must keep it. And, I think you can see already that the notion of education which the notemaker laid out earlier lends itself to an opposition between liberal and vocational education.

At least by now I have a perspective. You and your students can take either this one of mine or one of your own making from which to go on and do assignment B. I hope at least one thing is getting clear to you--that you must write and write and write. I have been led in my writing to some strange suggestions, one of which is that this whole essay boils down to the one sentence in which Horn introduces "preparing". And that would seem to make our task easier. But I would never have been led to that idea had I not written many notes before on many other essays. And so now, whether you have one sentence or twenty sentences, you probably already have seen that you must write. Before you or your students look at my contrary essay, write your own.

Part III: Exercise B: My Contrary Essay:

These remarks are concerned with one of the oldest and just now one of the bitterest of educational controversies--that concerning the relationship of liberal education to education variously described as vocational, professional, specialized or practical.

I hope to show that recent support of vocational education as basic to all education is based upon an illusion or misconception concerning "vocational education." In particular I address my remarks to Francis H. Horn who, in his essay entitled "The Folklore of Liberal Education," has claimed that an "examination of the history of higher education reveals" that education has to be practical or vocational in aim.

At the outset, let me stress that my education could, in a sense, be spoken of as a vocational education. My course of studies at the university prepared me to do school teaching and my education could, therefore, be spoken of as vocational in nature.

Let me also make it clear that I believe that vocational education plays a very important role in modern life. My concept of "vocational education" will become clear later in the essay. To begin my remarks I wish to point out that I shall use the term "liberal education" in its clearest sense, denoting that education, regardless of its level, which exposes a student to more than one area of knowledge.

In a brief look at the history of higher education it will be clear that the studies of each age have been liberal. In the classical period Plato's philosopher-king was to know not only the principles of the state, but also those of the arts and mathematics. Aristotle's concept of education was suitable for the leisure class who had time to expand their knowledge in many areas. In Roman times Cicero's "good man and able speaker" was to study "every branch of useful knowledge."

Even the medieval universities provided enough courses of study to produce doctors, lawyers, theologians and administrators, studies which could be used by men going into all these areas. Because of the demands of the age, however, the universities of the Middle Ages tended to limit their course of study to liberal studies which could be studied by men going into one of several professions as is pointed out by Rashdall, whose Universities of Europe During the Middle Ages is the standard work on the subject: "The rapid multiplication of universities during the 14th and 15th centuries was largely due to a direct demand for highly educated lawyers and administrators. In a sense the academic discipline of the Middle Ages was too practical...most of what we understand by 'culture,' much of what Aristotle understood by 'noble use of leisure,' was unappreciated by the medieval intellect."

The colonial colleges in America also fit in with the concept of liberal education. Harvard College was founded to provide the new colony with a learned clergy, who were, of course, also the teachers of the time.

The history of higher education can be spoken of as the history of a predominately practical education, but such education is described as 'vocational' only by means of an obvious misinterpretation of "vocational education." Although education has almost always been provided in order to prepare someone for a certain occupation, it has not always been vocational in nature. A vocational education is one in which only one course of studies, limited to one area of knowledge, is provided to prepare the student for a specific occupation.

Those who have recently supported vocational education and have claimed it to have a history as long as the history of higher education itself have misconstrued "vocational education." It is only within the last fifty years that we have sensed the possibility that vocational education, in the strictest sense of that term, might overthrow liberal education. As in the Middle Ages, there is a demand for graduates to be prepared for specialized tasks. But the new preparation, the new education, is by definition not preparing those same graduates for the general and demanding responsibilities of intelligent and informed citizenship in our democratic society.

We must provide our present day college students with that education which will prepare them for modern life, and the modern graduate must know a great many more things than did the graduate of the Middle Ages, such things as only a liberal education will provide.

The crisis is before us. We must know vocational education for the limited thing that it really is, and limit it to vocational schools. We must provide an integrated education for all college students and for all high school students as well. Such an education will result in the necessary vocational competence and, at the same time, the breadth of interest and the enlargement of knowledge which are the marks of a truly liberal education.

You should compare the essay I have written with yours and your students'. Find points where we followed different suggestions and see how we were led by these. Write some notes on how we came to differ.

Part IV:

Here I am including the notemaker's work in the teacher packet: that should not keep you--and your students--from going ahead with your own performance of the job.

A exercises: the notemaker's remarks:

I'm not going to give you any detailed comments of my own here. Instead I'm merely going to raise some questions about some of the expressions which sturck me as strange. There will be many others besides. If you are not struck at this point by many of them, then you have not been following this unit. By now you should be reading carefully and closely enough, should have an ear for the familiar and unfamiliar well enough developed, so that you hear these expressions and are struck by them.

In other words, you are on your own now. You've had two parts in which I gave you models--if you let me do all the work then, or if you thought I was giving you answers, then let me remind you that I was trying to show you a way of looking at essays. That "way" is the way in which you should now try to proceed.

"Time for a Change". This title should start your imagination going. A change of what? Has the oil served its purpose, gotten old and now is ready to be discarded?

Time for a change in pace? "I've been working hard all day and now I need some recreation or rest. And tomorrow I will be ready to start again." Is this the type of changing that is recommended in this essay?

Time for a change in cigarettes? "Have you been smoking more and enjoying it less? Change to...!" Here, what was being used was satisfactory but what you are to change to is supposed to be more satisfactory.

Change oil, change pace, change cigarettes--is Fitz Pamwater's "Time for a Change" like any of these? According to Pamwater, has the foreign aid program ever worked?

In the first paragraph this phrase appears, "Let us examine the facts and prove beyond a doubt..." Do you examine the facts and then prove, or is the examination of the facts the proof? Do you have something you want to prove before you examine the facts, or do you examine the facts and decide that they prove something?

Suppose your curiosity is aroused by a stone on the path. You examine it and notice that it has a distinct shape, as if deliberately cut or ground into shape. You examine other rocks in the vicinity, you find a cave, you find drawing on the walls--a discovery--cave man lived here! Is there proof? Is the stone a fact?

Suppose you are a doctor, and a person with certain complaints comes to you. Upon hearing the complaints you think that he is suffering from infectious mononucleosis. And now you check. Are you examining the facts and proving beyond a doubt? Suppose another doctor examines the patient and thinks that he has another disease. A disagreement arises and you say, "Let us examine the facts and I will prove beyond a doubt..."

In the second paragraph, last sentence, "In order to develop...these people need...[others] to share their burdens..." How do you go about developing your muscles? How would you develop a new kind of corn? What does sharing another man's burdens have to do with his developing...his muscles? his sense of responsibility?

"In order to develop their country...in order that they may learn and progress." Is this what it is, according to the author, to develop? Is one supposed to learn and progress? Learn what? Go where?

(Paragraph 4): "cannot change over night." What are some things that can change overnight? And what does the change amount to? A growing flower? The weather?

Is there an analogy which can express how Pamwater is thinking of a country changing? A child's manners? One's knowledge of the A B C's?

In paragraph six, there is a "Therefore, it is obvious...". Can you make the connections that lead to this "Therefore" and how it is that "it is obvious"? If you asked Fitz Pamwater to explain what was meant by "underdeveloped country," what do you think the explanation would be like? Could you recognize an underdeveloped country if you saw one? What would you be seeing? Could you give an explanation of "underdeveloped country" that you think would be like this one? In what sense "underdeveloped"? Like the skinny man who takes muscle building? Is the money given like the cream of wheat that should be eaten? Are newly built industries like newly formed muscles? What do you do with what you get? "I wanted muscles." "I wanted industry; I was underdeveloped." When do we know that our foreign aid has aided? When the village peasant knows how many millions of dollars were given last year?

Is our giving aid like giving a child a nickel to buy some gum? What now do we expect him to do with the nickel? Or is it like giving a child an allowance to do with as he likes? Perhaps it is like giving a dime to a beggar who says he wants to buy a cup of coffee, and, once he has our dime, he buys a beer. (Look at paragraph 7 in the light of these comments.)

(Paragraph 10) Why does the author think sending volunteer workers is a remedy whereas sending more money is not?

Perhaps Pamwater is thinking of the situation like this: our giving a child a dollar to buy a book about the alphabet before the child can read. We need to teach the child how to read before we give him a dollar to buy a book.

Do we also need to teach the underdeveloped countries how to spend a dollar before we give them a dollar? And who is to say when they know how? We? And who would want to spend a dollar under those conditions?

Did we expect the foreign aid to help in a certain way and then see that it did not? The change is not to try again to accomplish what we originally had in mind, only by using different methods. Or are we to change the reasons we give our help?

Has our aid always gone to "underdeveloped countries" or has some gone to countries in need? If a friend needs a dollar do you tell him that he needs to dress better or take a bath before you give him a dollar? (In paragraphs 8 and 9 there are notions that the countries should "mobilize their own citizen's resources" and "help themselves."

B exercises:

You are on your own for the B exercises.

Part V: A exercises:

What I'm going to do is to suggest two or three analogies. Before doing the assignment, read them carefully--you may wish to read them to your students--and try to get clear on how they work. Try to understand just what the analogy is in each case before reading what I have to say. In going about the work, you and the students should try to get clear on the principle behind the aphorism:

1. Do you know why we have trouble keeping everyone supplied with apples? Everyone wants an apple. If only people wouldn't want a apple...!

It may look as though the reason we cannot keep everyone supplied with apples is that we do not have enough apples and, thus, the means to keeping everyone supplied with apples may appear to be to grow more apples. But, since everyone wants an apple--or could want an apple--the problem is not solved--more apples, more wants. A continuous wanting of apples draws on the supply of apples. What we need to do is remove the wanting; then, we will have enough apples.

2. It may look as though Nietzsche is saying something like this: the way to stop a fight is to keep your hands in your pockets (the means to real peace is to abolish armies). But having your hands out of your pockets is not why you have a fight (nor is having an army why people have wars), and Nietzsche sees this. What would Nietzsche say is the cause of a fight and what would he suggest to stop it?

3. According to the principle used in this aphorism why are the Negroes demanding more civil rights? And, according to the principle expounded by Nietzsche, what is the means of satisfying their demands?

The key sentences are, I think, these:

"No government admits any more that it keeps an army to satisfy occasionally the desire for conquest."

"We must abjure the doctrine of the army as a means of self-defense just as completely as the desire for conquests."

(It is important, then, to see how the decision involved in "...will exclaim of its own free will..." is part of the means to real peace.)

Work again with some analogies. In using them work out in some notes the principle at work in the aphorism. You should try some of your own, but may also use mine if you realize that I've only given you seeds here and that each of my suggestions must be made to grow, must be enlarged.

A Variation of the B Assignment:

Making use of the principle which is guiding Nietzsche's thinking in this aphorism, write an aphorism of your own; have the students do the same thing. Here are some topics which may lend themselves to being treated with this principle:

"The means to satisfactory civil-rights legislation."

"The means to happiness among children when sharing toys."

"The means to real prosperity."

Part VI: Lippmann (p. 80):

A Exercises: Uses, analogies, the point:

Here we're going to do something a little different. As we have said before, sometimes an author will write and all of his analogies will be "hidden." But in this essay Lippmann uses them openly to make his points clear. So, the assignment here is to have the students work with the analogies he gives them. Have them work them out as thoroughly as they can and then draw out why they agree or disagree with Lippmann as to the relevance or usefulness of these analogies.

All the notemaker is going to do here is to tell you a handful of things he noticed. He is not going to suggest familiar uses of expressions, work with analogies, or draw out what he's mentioned. He is just going to mention them as a possible help to you in seeing what sort of things assignment A is interested in.

Consider, for example, the analogy used in paragraph six. In the last of paragraph five Lippmann says, "Freedom of discussion improves our own opinions." He likens this to improving our health. ('...improving our health...' is not Lippmann's phrase but this is, I think, the basis of the analogy.) With the help of 'complete freedom of speech' (asking embarrassing questions and prescribing disagreeable diets) the doctor is able to cure our stomach-ache. Our opinions are, it seems, like a stomach-ache, and the opinions of some one else are like the doctor's questions and prescriptions--not always pleasant, but helpful.

Is the doctor exercising his freedom of speech when he tells us to take roll-aids?

How is it that one man's opinions are sick and another man's opinions are the cure? (Part of what is involved here is Lippmann's notion that one man cannot find the truth on his own. But who says two can?)

Must we assume that we are sick and must we regard every expression of an opinion as a request for a diagnosis and a prescription?

Paragraph 18 is a cluster of analogies. Each of these provide interesting comparisons particularly if you remember that Lippmann is trying to characterize the place that freedom of speech has in the search for the truth. (You may not see this attempt as being the root or basis of this essay, but I think that it is.) In finding the truth, is there a chance to vote on the issues as there is in Congress? Is there a judge? and a punishment? Could something like a mathematical formula be used?

One thing that perhaps came out of my working with analogies which are related to this essay is an explanation of the title, "The Indispensable Opposition". The picture which seems to lie behind the sense of this essay is Lippmann's notion of how the truth is arrived at. It is as though Lippmann said that "There is only one system which will normally and habitually" (paragraph 9) get you to the top of the mountain and that is to have two people on opposite ends of a rope. "As long as there is tension on the rope you are making headway toward the top." Such a system would seem to be workable even in a fog. Two questions might now arise:

1. How do you know that every tug of the rope is an indication that you are going up? Why not down?

2. How do you know when you have reached the top? Is the tension gone? But that could have happened at the bottom? Hair stand on end? A thrill in your heart?

3. Questions related to 1 and 2 would seem relevant in trying to understand Lippmann's essay:

    a. Is every opposing force (opinion) a help in finding the truth?

    b. How do we know we have found the truth?

Lippmann's directions as to how to find the truth (directions which make the opposition indispensable) seem applicable in a fog. That is, even if one does not know where or what the truth is, he is to listen to the opinions of others. It seems that we can ask Mr. Lippmann, "Have you ever found it, by this system or by any other syster?" Lippmann says, "But if the truth can be found, there is no other system which will normally and habitually find so much truth." (paragraph 9) "IF?" "IF?" Is that like "IF the mountain can be climbed...."? But how are you to know if the mountain is climbable? Or is that "IF" like "I don't know of any mountains being climbed but if a mountain could be climbed..."?

Is Lippmann's notion of finding the truth applicable to every time the truth could be found?

B exercises:

Have the students write an essay in which they show how the opposition is dispensable. In their essay, they should work with some of the main concepts Lippmann is working with--"freedom of speech," "freedom of opinion," "liberty," "right," "debate," "finding the truth," "toleration." The connections which they make among them and the significance they attach to each may well vary from Lippmann's. All I wish to do here is mention one way in which they could work--there are others--so now they are on their own. You are also on your own.

I think you will find your essay easier to write if you first spend a little time trying to get in mind a particular picture of how the truth is arrived at; the particular picture I am thinking of shows that the final arrival at truth is an individual matter. The ultimate or last step to what the truth is, is made on an individual basis. An analogy such as climbing a mountain may help. Lippmann's essay defends political freedom--"the right to speak freely and act in opposition"--on this basis--that a man must be able to speak and be listened to by at least one other man if any one man is to arrive at the truth. In my essay I might find it difficult to say that political freedom is necessary because the final arrival at truth is accomplished through the decision of an isolated individual. I might find it better to defend something compatible with this notion of arriving at the truth--e.g. the right to privacy. One needs privacy. And now wire-tapping is wrong. And so is asking personal or pointed questions; each time I engage someone else in conversation I am depriving that person of the solitude necessary to arriving at the truth. (Opposition is just like tying a rope onto someone and preventing him from climbing a mountain.) Perhaps I would prefer to entitle my essay "Privacy--An Indispensable Right." Privacy is now "a practical necessity" not just "a noble ideal" (Compare paragraph 1.)

Following Lippmann's essay write an essay similar in size, style, and tone, but, of course, with a different notion of arriving at the truth--defending a different point..

Conclusion:

The instructor should not stop asking his students to think with concepts at the end of this unit. He should ask students several times during the year to do this kind of analysis of their own and of other students' essays. This type of analysis should certainly be carried on into the twelfth grade in the scrutinizing of essays which the students themselves write.